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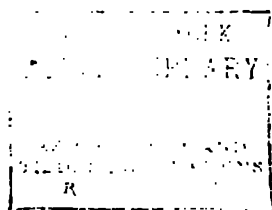
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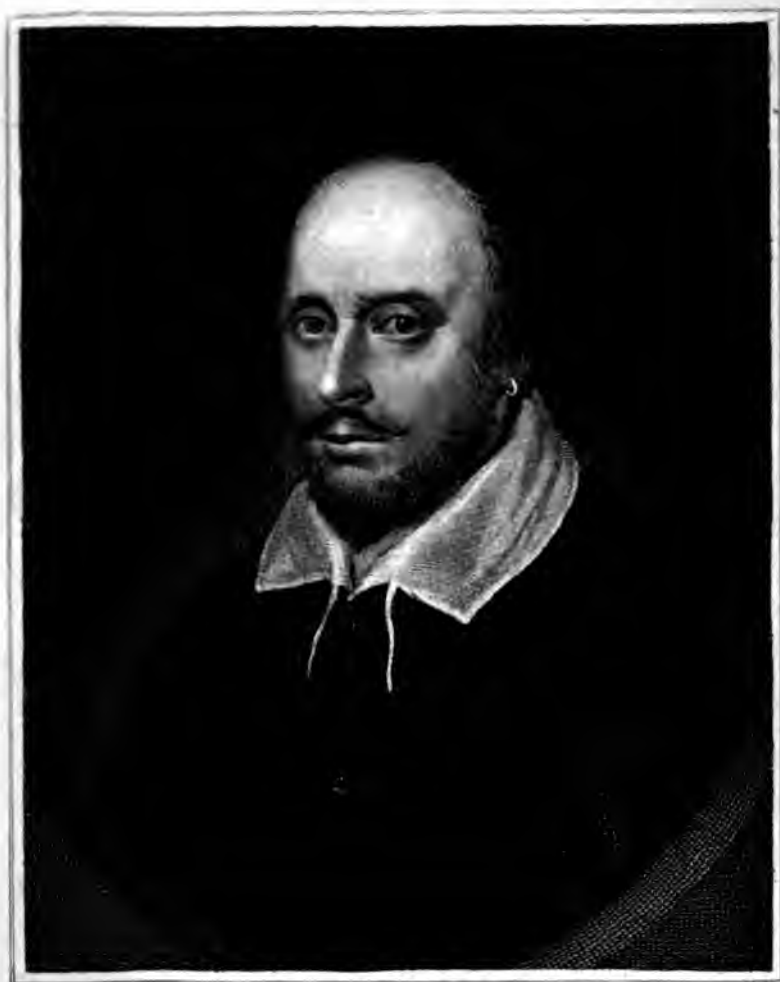
HISTORY
OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY
H. A. TAINE, D. C. L.

IMPERIAL EDITION.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

IMPERIAL EDITION

HISTORY
OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

H. A. TAINE, D. C. L.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

H. VAN LAUN

One of the Masters at the Edinburgh Academy

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CONTENTS.—VOL. III.

PART I.

BOOK III.—THE CLASSIC AGE.

CHAPTER II.

Dryden.

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| I. Dryden's beginnings—Close of the poetic age— Cause of literary decline and regeneration . . . | 1 |
| II. Family—Education—Studies—Reading—Habits —Position—Character—Audience—Friend- ships—Quarrels—Harmony of his life and talent . . . | 3 |
| III. The theatres re-opened and transformed—The new public and the new taste—Dramatic theories of Dryden—His judgment of the old English theatre—His judgment of the new French theatre—Composite works—Incongruities of his drama— <i>Tyrannic Love</i> —Grossness of his charac- ters— <i>The Indian Emperor, Aureng-zebe, Almansor</i> . . . | 6 |
| IV. Style of his drama—Rhymed verse—Flowery diction—Pedantic tirades—Want of agreement between the classical style and romantic events —How Dryden borrows and mars the inventions of Shakspeare and Milton—Why this drama fell to the ground | 21 |
| V. Merits of this drama—Characters of Antony and Don Sebastian—Otway—Life—Works . . . | 29 |

to volume 22 June '938

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| VI. Dryden as a writer—Kind, scope, and limits of his mind—Clumsiness in flattery and obscenity—Heaviness in dissertation and discussion—Vigour and fundamental uprightness | 43 |
| VII. How literature in England is occupied with politics and religion—Political poems of Dryden, <i>Absalom and Achitophel</i> , <i>The Medal</i> —Religious poems, <i>Religio Laici</i> , <i>The Hind and the Panther</i> —Bitterness and virulence of these poems— <i>Mac Flecknoe</i> | 51 |
| VIII. Rise of the art of writing—Difference between the stamp of mind of the artistic and classic ages—Dryden's manner of writing—Sustained and oratorical diction | 59 |
| IX. Lack of general ideas in this age and this stamp of mind—Dryden's translations—Adaptations—Imitations—Tales and letters—Faults—Merits—Gravity of his character, brilliancy of his inspiration, fits and starts of poetic eloquence— <i>Alexander's Feast</i> , a song in honour of St. Cecilia's Day | 62 |
| X. Dryden's latter days—Wretchedness—Poverty—Wherein his work is incomplete—Death | 71 |

CHAPTER III.

The Revolution.

| | |
|---|----|
| I. The moral revolution of the seventeenth century—It advances side by side with the political revolution | 73 |
| II. Brutality of the people—Gin Riots—Corruption of the great—Political manners—Treachery under William III. and Anne—Venality under Walpole and Bute—Private manners—The roysterers— | |

CONTENTS.

vii

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| The atheists—Chesterfield's <i>Letters</i> —His polish and morality—Gay's <i>Beggars' Opera</i> —His elegance and satire | 73 |
| III. Principles of civilisation in France and England—Conversation in France ; how it ends in a revolution—Moral sense in England ; how it ends in a reformation | 85 |
| IV. Religion—Visible signs—Its profound sentiment—Religion popular—Lifelike—Arians—Methodists | 91 |
| V. The pulpit—Mediocrity and efficacy of preaching—Tillotson—His heaviness and solidity—Barrow—His abundance and minuteness—South—His harshness and energy—Comparison of French and English preachers | 99 |
| VI. Theology—Comparison of the French and English apologetics—Sherlock, Stillingfleet, Clarke—Theology not speculative but moral—The greatest minds are on the side of Christianity—Impotence of speculative philosophy—Berkeley, Newton, Locke, Hume, Reid—Development of moral philosophy—Smith, Price, Hutcheson | 111 |
| VII. The Constitution—Sentiment of right—Locke's <i>Essay on Government</i> —Theory of personal right accepted—Maintained by temperament, pride, and interest—Theory of personal right applied—Put in practice by elections, the press, the tribunals | 119 |
| VIII. Parliamentary eloquence—Its energy and harshness—Lord Chatham—Junius—Fox—Sheridan—Pitt—Burke | 128 |
| IX. Issue of the century's labours—Economic and moral transformation—Comparison of Reynolds' and Lely's portraits—Contrary doctrines and ten- | |

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| dencies in France and England—Revolutionists and Conservatives—Judgment of Burke and the English people on the French revolution . . . | 140 |

CHAPTER IV.

Addison.

| | |
|--|-----|
| I. Addison and Swift in their epoch—Wherein they are alike and unlike | 150 |
| II. The man—Education and culture—Latin verses—Voyage in France and Italy— <i>Letter from Italy to Lord Halifax</i> — <i>Remarks on Italy</i> — <i>Dialogues on Medals</i> — <i>Campaign</i> —Gentleness and kindness—Success and happiness | 151 |
| III. Gravity and rationality—Solid studies and exact observation—His knowledge of men and business habits—Nobility of his character and conduct—Elevation of his morality and religion—How his life and character have contributed to the pleasantness and usefulness of his writings | 158 |
| IV. The moralist—His essays are all moral—Against gross, sensual, or worldly life—This morality is practical, and yet commonplace and desultory—How it relies on reason and calculation—How it has for its end satisfaction in this world and happiness in the other—Speculative meanness of his religious conception—Practical excellence of his religious conception | 163 |
| V. The literary man—Harmony of morality and elegance—The style that suits men of the world—Merits of this style—Inconveniences—Addison as a critic—His judgment of <i>Paradise Lost</i> —Agree- | |

CONTENTS.

ix

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| ment of his art and criticism—Limits of classical criticism and art—What is lacking in the eloquence of Addison, of the Englishman and of the moralist | 174 |
| VI. Grave pleasantry—Humour—Serious and fertile imagination— <i>Sir Roger de Coverley</i> —The religious and the poetical sentiment— <i>Vision of Mirza</i> —How the Germanic element subsists under Latin culture | 181 |

CHAPTER V.

Swift.

| | |
|---|-----|
| I. Swift's début—Character—Pride—Sensitiveness—His life in Sir William Temple's house—At Lord Berkeley's—Political life—Influence—Failure—Private life—Lovemaking—Despair and insanity | 198 |
| II. His wit—His power, and its limits—Prosaic and positive mind—Holding a position between vulgarity and genius—Why destructive | 210 |
| III. The pamphleteer—How literature now concerns itself with politics—Difference of parties and pamphlets in France and England—Conditions of the literary pamphlet—Of the effective pamphlet—Special and practical pamphlets— <i>The Examiner</i> — <i>The Drapier's Letters</i> — <i>A Short Character of Thomas Earl of Wharton</i> — <i>An Argument against Abolishing Christianity</i> —Political invective—Personal defamation—Incisive common sense—Grave irony | 214 |
| IV. The poet—Comparison of Swift and Voltaire—Gravity and harshness of his jests— <i>Bickerstaff</i> — | |

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Coarseness of his gallantry— <i>Cadmus and Vanessa</i> | |
| —His prosaic and realistic poetry— <i>The Grand Question Debated</i> —Energy and sadness of his shorter poems— <i>Verses on his own Death</i> —His excesses | 226 |

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

Volume III.

Part I.

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, | Frontispiece. |
| EDMUND SPENSER, | Page 22 |
| ROBERT BURNS, | " 43 |
| GEOFFREY CHAUCER, | " 64 |
| JOSEPH ADDISON, | " 100 |
| HON. ROBERT BOYLE, | " 115 |
| BISHOP BUTLER, | " 141 |
| JEREMY BENTHAM, | " 142 |

HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

BOOK III.

THE CLASSIC AGE

CHAPTER II.

Bryden.

COMEDY has led us a long way ; we must return on our steps and consider other kind of writings. A higher spirit moves in the midst of the great current. In the history of this talent we shall find the history of the English classical spirit, its structure, its gaps, and its powers, its formation and its development.

I.

The subject of the following lines is a young man, Lord Hastings, who died of smallpox at the age of nineteen :

“ His body was an orb, his sublime soul
Did move on virtue's and on learning's pole ;
... Come, learned Ptolemy, and trial make
If thou this hero's altitude canst take.
... Blisters with pride swell'd, which through's flesh did
 sprout
Like rose-buds, stuck i' the lily skin about.

VOL. III.

B

111

Each little pimple had a tear in it,
 To wail the fault its rising did commit. . . .
 Or were these gems sent to adorn his skin,
 The cabinet of a richer soul within ?
 No comet need foretel his change drew on
 Whose corpse might seem a constellation."¹

With such a pretty morsel, Dryden, the greatest poet of the classical age, makes his *début*.

Such enormities indicate the close of a literary age. Excess of folly in poetry, as excess of injustice in political matters, lead up to and foretell revolutions. The Renaissance, unchecked and original, abandoned the minds of men to the excitement and caprice of imagination, the eccentricities, curiosities, outbreaks of a fancy which only cares to content itself, breaks out into singularities, has need of novelties, and loves audacity and extravagance, as reason loves justice and truth. After the extinction of genius folly remained ; after the removal of inspiration nothing was left but absurdity. Formerly disorder and internal enthusiasm produced and excused *concetti* and wild flights ; thenceforth men threw them out in cold blood, by calculation and without excuse. Formerly they expressed the state of the mind, now they belie it. So are literary revolutions accomplished. The form, no longer original or spontaneous, but imitated and passed from hand to hand, outlives the old spirit which had created it, and is in opposition to the new spirit which destroys it. This preliminary strife and progressive transformation make up the life of Dryden, and account for his impotence and his failures, his talent and his success.

¹ Dryden's *Works*, ed. Sir Walter Scott, 2d ed., 18 vols., 1821, xi. 94.

II.

Dryden's beginnings are in striking contrast with those of the poets of the Renaissance, actors, vagabonds, soldiers, who were tossed about from the first in all the contrasts and miseries of active life. He was born in 1631, of a good family; his grandfather and uncle were baronets; Sir Gilbert Pickering, his first cousin, was created a baronet by Charles the First, was a member of Parliament, chamberlain to the Protector, and one of his Peers. Dryden was brought up in an excellent school, under Dr. Busby, then in high repute; after which he passed four years at Cambridge. Having inherited by his father's death a small estate, he used his liberty and fortune only to remain in his studious life, and continued in seclusion at the University for three years more. These are the regular habits of an honourable and well-to-do family, the discipline of a connected and solid education, the taste for classical and complete studies. Such circumstances announce and prepare, not an artist, but a man of letters.

I find the same inclination and the same signs in the remainder of his life, private or public. He regularly spends his mornings in writing or reading, then dines with his family. His reading was that of a man of culture and a critical mind, who does not think of amusing or exciting himself, but who learns and judges. Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius were his favourite authors; he translated several; their names were always on his pen; he discusses their opinions and their merits, feeding himself on that reasoning which oratorical customs had imprinted on all the works of the Roman mind. He is familiar with the new French

literature, the heir of the Latin, with Corneille and Racine, Boileau, Rapin, and Bossu;¹ he reasons with them, often in their spirit, writes thoughtfully, seldom fails to arrange some good theory to justify each of his new works. He knew very well the literature of his own country, though sometimes not very accurately, gave to authors their due rank, classified the different kinds of writing, went back as far as old Chaucer, whom he translated and put into a modern dress. His mind thus filled, he would go in the afternoon to Will's coffee-house, the great literary rendezvous: young poets, students fresh from the University, literary dilettante crowded round his chair, carefully placed in summer on the balcony, in winter by the fire, thinking themselves fortunate to listen to him, or to extract a pinch of snuff respectfully from his learned snuff-box. For indeed he was the monarch of taste and the umpire of letters; he criticised novelties—Racine's last tragedy, Blackmore's heavy epic, Swift's first poems; slightly vain, praising his own writings, to the extent of saying that "no one had ever composed or will ever compose a finer ode" than his own Alexander's Feast; but full of information, fond of that interchange of ideas which discussion never fails to produce, capable of enduring contradiction, and admitting his adversary to be in the right. These manners show that literature had become a matter of study rather than of inspiration, an employment for taste rather than for enthusiasm, a source of amusement rather than of emotion.

¹ Rapin (1621-1687), a French Jesuit, a modern Latin poet and literary critic. Bossu, or properly Leboasu (1631-1680), wrote a *Traité du Poème épique*, which had a great success in its day. Both critics are now completely forgotten.—Ta.

His audience, his friendships, his actions, his quarrels, had the same tendency. He lived amongst great men and courtiers, in a society of artificial manners and measured language. He had married the daughter of Thomas, Earl of Berkshire; he was historiographer-royal and poet-laureate. He often saw the king and the princes. He dedicated each of his works to some lord, in a laudatory, flunkeyish preface, bearing witness to his intimate acquaintance with the great. He received a purse of gold for each dedication, went to return thanks; introduces some of these Lords under pseudonyms in his *Essay on the Dramatic Art*; wrote introductions for the works of others, called them Mæcenæ, Tibullus, or Pollio; discussed with them literary works and opinions. The re-establishment of the court had brought back the art of conversation, vanity, the necessity for appearing to be a man of letters and of possessing good taste, all the company-manners which are the source of classical literature, and which teach men the art of speaking well.¹ On the other hand, literature, brought under the influence of society, entered into society's interests, and first of all in petty private quarrels. Whilst men of letters learned etiquette, courtiers learned how to write. They soon became jumbled together, and naturally fell to blows. The Duke of Buckingham wrote a parody on Dryden, *The Rehearsal*, and took infinite pains to teach the chief actor Dryden's tone and gestures. Later, Rochester took up the cudgels against the poet, supported a cabal in favour of Settle against him, and hired a band

¹ In his *Defence of the Epilogue of the Second Part of the Conquest of Granada*, iv. 226, Dryden says: "Now, if they ask me, whence it is that our conversation is so much refined? I must freely, and without flattery, ascribe it to the court."

of ruffians to cudgel him. Besides this, Dryden had quarrels with Shadwell and a crowd of others, and finally with Blackmore and Jeremy Collier. To crown all, he entered into the strife of political parties and religious sects, fought for the Tories and Anglicans, then for the Roman Catholics; wrote *The Medal*, *Absalom and Achitophel* against the Whigs; *Religio Laici* against Dissenters and Papists; then *The Hind and Panther* for James II., with the logic of controversy and the bitterness of party. It is a long way from this combative and argumentative existence to the reveries and seclusion of the true poet. Such circumstances teach the art of writing clearly and soundly, methodical and connected discussion, strong and exact style, banter and refutation, eloquence and satire; these gifts are necessary to make a man of letters heard or believed, and the mind enters compulsorily upon a track when it is the only one that can conduct it to its goal. Dryden entered upon it spontaneously. In his second production,¹ the abundance of well-ordered ideas, the energy and oratorical harmony, the simplicity, the gravity, the heroic and Roman spirit, announce a classic genius, the relative not of Shakespeare, but of Corneille, capable not of dramas, but of discussions.

III.

And yet, at first, he devoted himself to the drama: he wrote twenty-seven pieces, and signed an agreement with the actors of the King's Theatre to supply them with three every year. The theatre, forbidden under the Commonwealth, had just re-opened with extraordinary magnificence and success. The rich scenes made moveable, the women's parts no longer played by

¹ *Heroic stanzas to the memory of Oliver Cromwell.*

boys, but by women, the novel and splendid wax-lights, the machinery, the recent popularity of actors who had become heroes of fashion, the scandalous importance of the actresses, who were mistresses of the aristocracy and of the king, the example of the court and the imitation of France, drew spectators in crowds. The thirst for pleasure, long repressed, knew no bounds. Men indemnified themselves for the long abstinence imposed by fanatical Puritans; eyes and ear, disgusted with gloomy faces, nasal pronunciation, official ejaculations on sin and damnation, satiated themselves with sweet singing, sparkling dress, the seduction of voluptuous dances. They wished to enjoy life, and that in a new fashion; for a new world, that of the courtiers and the idle, had been formed. The abolition of feudal tenures, the vast increase of commerce and wealth, the concourse of landed proprietors, who let their lands and came to London to enjoy the pleasures of the town and to court the favours of the king, had installed on the summit of society, in England as well as in France, rank, authority, the manners and tastes of the world of fashion, of the idle, the drawing-room frequenters, lovers of pleasure, conversation, wit, and polish, occupied with the piece in vogue, less to amuse themselves than to criticise it. Thus was Dryden's drama built up; the poet, greedy of glory and pressed for money, found here both money and glory, and was half an innovator, with a large reinforcement of theories and prefaces, diverging from the old English drama, approaching the new French tragedy, attempting a compromise between classical eloquence and romantic truth, accommodating himself as well as he could to the new public, which paid and applauded him.

"The language, wit, and conversation of our age, are improved and refined above the last. . . . Let us consider in what the refinement of a language principally consists; that is, 'either in rejecting such old words, or phrases, which are ill-sounding or improper; or in admitting new, which are more proper, more sounding, and more significant.' . . . Let any man, who understands English, read diligently the works of Shakspeare and Fletcher, and I dare undertake, that he will find in every page either some solecism of speech, or some notorious flaw in sense. . . . Many of (their plots) were made up of some ridiculous incoherent story, which in one play many times took up the business of an age. I suppose I need not name *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, nor the historical plays of Shakspeare; besides many of the rest, as the *Winter's Tale*, *Love's Labour Lost*, *Measure for Measure*, which were either grounded on impossibilities, or at least so meanly written, that the comedy neither caused your mirth, nor the serious part your concernment. . . . I could easily demonstrate, that our admired Fletcher neither understood correct plotting, nor that which they call the decorum of the stage. . . . The reader will see Philaster wounding his mistress, and afterwards his boy, to save himself. . . . And for his shepherd he falls twice into the former indecency of wounding women."¹

Fletcher nowhere permits kings to retain a dignity suited to kings. Moreover, the action of these authors' plays is always barbarous. They introduce battles on the stage; they transport the scene in a moment to a distance of twenty years or five hundred leagues, and a score of times consecutively in one act; they jumble together three or four different actions, especially in the historical dramas. But they sin most in style. Dryden says of Shakspeare:—"Many of his words,

¹ *Defence of the Epilogue of the Second Part of the Conquest of Granada*, iv. 213.

and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand, some are ungrammatical, others coarse; and his whole style is so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure."¹ Ben Jonson himself often has bad plots, redundancies, barbarisms: "Well-placing of words, for the sweetness of pronunciation, was not known till Mr. Waller introduced it"² All, in short, descend to quibbles, low and common expressions: "In the age wherein those poets lived, there was less of gallantry than in ours. . . . Besides the want of education and learning, they wanted the benefit of converse. . . . Gentlemen will now be entertained with the follies of each other; and, though they allow Cob and Tibb to speak properly, yet they are not much pleased with their tankard, or with their rags."³ For these gentlemen we must now write, and especially for "reasonable men;" for it is not enough to have wit or to love tragedy, in order to be a good critic: we must possess sound knowledge and a lofty reason, know Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, and pronounce judgment according to their rules.⁴ These rules, based upon observation and logic, prescribe unity of action; that this action should have a beginning, middle, and end; that its parts should proceed naturally one from the other; that it should excite terror and pity, so as to instruct and improve us; that the characters should be distinct, harmonious, conformable with tradition or the design of the poet. Such, says Dryden, will be the new tragedy, closely allied, it seems, to the French, especially

¹ Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, vi. 239.

² *Defence of the Epilogue of the Conquest of Granada*, iv. 219.

³ *Ibid.* 225-228.

⁴ Preface to *All for Love*, v. 306.

as he quotes Bossu and Rapin, as if he took them for instructors.

Yet it differs from it, and Dryden enumerates all that an English pit can blame on the French stage. He says :

“The beauties of the French poesy are the beauties of a statue, but not of a man, because not animated with the soul of poesy, which is imitation of humour and passions. . . . He who will look upon their plays which have been written till these last ten years, or thereabouts, will find it an hard matter to pick out two or three passable humours amongst them. Corneille himself, their arch-poet, what has he produced except the *Liar*? and you know how it was cried up in France; but when it came upon the English stage, though well translated, . . . the most favourable to it would not put it in competition with many of Fletcher's or Ben Jonson's. . . . Their verses are to me the coldest I have ever read, . . . their speeches being so many declamations. When the French stage came to be reformed by Cardinal Richelieu, those long harangues were introduced, to comply with the gravity of a churchman. Look upon the *Cinna* and the *Pompey*; they are not so properly to be called plays as long discourses of reasons of state; and *Polieucte*, in matters of religion is as solemn as the long stops upon our organs. Since that time it is grown into a custom, and their actors speak by the hour-glass, like our parsons. . . . I deny not but this may suit well enough with the French; for as we who are a more sullen people, come to be diverted at our plays, so they, who are of an airy and gay temper, come thither to make themselves more serious.”¹

As for the tumults and combats which the French relegate behind the scenes, “nature has so formed our countrymen to fierceness, . . . they will scarcely suffer combats and other objects of horror to be taken from them.”² Thus the French, by fettering themselves with

¹ *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, xv. 337-341.

² *Ibid.* 343.

these scruples,¹ and confining themselves in their unities and their rules, have removed action from their stage, and brought themselves down to unbearable monotony and dryness. They lack originality, naturalness, variety, fulness.

" . . . Contented to be thinly regular : . . .
 Their tongue, enfeebled, is refined too much,
 And, like pure gold, it bends at every touch.
 Our sturdy Teuton yet will art obey,
 More fit for manly thought, and strengthened with allay."²

Let them laugh as much as they like at Fletcher and Shakspeare ; there is in them " a more masculine fancy and greater spirit in the writing than there is in any of the French."

Though exaggerated, this criticism is good ; and because it is good, I mistrust the works which the writer

¹ In the preface of *All for Love*, v. 308, Dryden says : " In this nicety of manners does the excellency of French poetry consist. Their heroes are the most civil people breathing, but their good breeding seldom extends to a word of sense ; all their wit is in their ceremony ; they want the genius which animates our stage. . . . Thus, their Hippolytus is so scrupulous in point of decency, that he will rather expose himself to death than accuse his step-mother to his father ; and my critics, I am sure, will commend him for it : But we of grosser apprehensions are apt to think that this excess of generosity is not practicable but with fools and madmen. . . . But take Hippolytus out of his poetic fit, and I suppose he would think it a wiser part to set the saddle on the right horse, and chuse rather to live with the reputation of a plain-spoken honest man, than to die with the infamy of an incestuous villain. . . . (The poet) has chosen to give him the turn of gallantry, sent him to travel from Athens to Paris, taught him to make love, and transformed the Hippolytus of Euripides into Monsieur Hippolite." This criticism shows in a small compass all the common sense and freedom of thought of Dryden ; but, at the same time, all the coarseness of his education and of his age.

² Epistle xiv., to Mr. Motteux, xi. 70.

is to produce. It is dangerous for an artist to be excellent in theory; the creative spirit is hardly consonant with the criticising spirit: he who, quietly seated on the shore, discusses and compares, is hardly capable of plunging straight and boldly into the stormy sea of invention. Moreover, Dryden holds himself too evenly poised betwixt the moods; original artists love exclusively and unjustly a certain idea and a certain world; the rest disappears from their eyes; confined to one region of art, they deny or scorn the other; it is because they are limited that they are strong. We see beforehand that Dryden, pushed one way by his English mind, will be drawn another way by his French rules; that he will alternately venture and partly restrain himself; that he will attain mediocrity, that is, platitude; that his faults will be incongruities, that is, absurdities. All original art is self-regulated, and no original art can be regulated from without: it carries its own counterpoise, and does not receive it from elsewhere; it constitutes an inviolable whole; it is an animated existence, which lives on its own blood, and which languishes or dies if deprived of some of its blood and supplied from the veins of another. Shakspeare's imagination cannot be guided by Racine's reason, nor Racine's reason be exalted by Shakspeare's imagination; each is good in itself, and excludes its rival; to unite them would be to produce a bastard, a weakling, and a monster. Disorder, violent and sudden action, harsh words, horror, depth, truth, exact imitation of reality, and the lawless outbursts of mad passions,—these features of Shakspeare become each other. Order, measure, eloquence, aristocratic refinement, worldly urbanity, exquisite painting of delicacy and virtue, all Racine's features suit

each other. It would destroy the one to attenuate, the other to inflame him. Their whole being and beauty consist in the agreement of their parts: to mar this agreement would be to abolish their being and their beauty. In order to produce, we must invent a personal and harmonious conception: we must not mingle two strange and opposite ones. Dryden has left undone what he should have done, and has done what he should not have done.

He had, moreover, the worst of audiences, debauched and frivolous, void of individual taste, floundering amid confused recollections of the national literature and deformed imitations of foreign literature, expecting nothing from the stage but the pleasure of the senses or the gratification of curiosity. In reality, the drama, like every work of art, only gives life and truth to a profound ideal of man and of existence; there is a hidden philosophy under its circumvolutions and violences, and the public ought to be capable of comprehending it, as the poet is of conceiving it. The audience must have reflected or felt with energy or refinement, in order to take in energetic or refined thoughts; Hamlet and Iphigénie will never move a vulgar roisterer or a lover of money. The character who weeps on the stage only rehearses our own tears; our interest is but sympathy; and the drama is like an external conscience, which shows us what we are, what we love, what we have felt. What could the drama teach to gamesters like St. Albans, drunkards like Rochester, prostitutes like Castlemaine, old boys like Charles II.? What spectators were those coarse epicureans, incapable even of an assumed decency, lovers of brutal pleasures, barbarians in their sports

obscene in words, void of honour, humanity, politeness, who made the court a house of ill fame! The splendid decorations, change of scenes, the patter of long verse and forced sentiments, the observance of a few rules imported from Paris,—such was the natural food of their vanity and folly, and such the theatre of the English Restoration.

I take one of Dryden's tragedies, very celebrated in time past, *Tyrannic Love, or the Royal Martyr*;—a fine title, and fit to make a stir. The royal martyr is St. Catharine, a princess of royal blood as it appears, who is brought before the tyrant Maximin. She confesses her faith, and a pagan philosopher Apollonius is set loose against her, to refute her. Maximin says:

“War is my province!—Priest, why stand you mute?
You gain by heaven, and, therefore, should dispute.”

Thus encouraged, the priest argues; but St. Catharine replies in the following words:

“ . . . Reason with your fond religion fights,
For many gods are many infinities;
This to the first philosophers was known,
Who, under various names, ador'd but one.”¹

Apollonius scratches his ear a little, and then answers that there are great truths and good moral rules in paganism. The pious logician immediately replies:

“Then let the whole dispute concluded be
Betwixt these rules, and Christianity.”²

Being nonplussed, Apollonius is converted on the spot, insults the prince, who, finding St. Catharine very

¹ *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 2. 1.

² *Ibid.*

beautiful, becomes suddenly enamoured, and makes jokes :

“ Absent, I may her martyrdom decree,
But one look more will make that martyr me.”¹

In this dilemma he sends Placidius, “ a great officer,” to St. Catharine ; the great officer quotes and praises the gods of Epicurus ; forthwith the lady propounds the doctrine of final causes, which upsets that of atoms. Maximin comes himself, and says :

“ Since you neglect to answer my desires,
Know, princess, you shall burn in other fires.”²

Thereupon she beards and defies him, calls him a slave, and walks off. Touched by these delicate manners, he wishes to marry her lawfully, and to repudiate his wife. Still, to omit no expedient, he employs a magician, who utters invocations (on the stage), summons the infernal spirits, and brings up a troop of Spirits ; these dance and sing voluptuous songs about the bed of St. Catharine. Her guardian-angel comes and drives them away. As a last resource, Maximin has a wheel brought on the stage, on which to expose St. Catharine and her mother. Whilst the executioners are going to strip the saint, a modest angel descends in the nick of time, and breaks the wheel ; after which the ladies are carried off, and their throats are cut behind the wings. Add to these

¹ *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 2. 1.

² *Ibid* 3. 1. This Maximin has a turn for jokes. Porphyrius, to whom he offers his daughter in marriage, says that “ the distance was so vast ; ” whereupon Maximin replies : “ Yet heaven and earth, which so remote appear, are by the air, which flows betwixt them, near ” (2. 1).

pretty inventions a twofold intrigue, the love of Maximin's daughter, Valeria, for Porphyrius, captain of the Prætorian bands, and that of Porphyrius for Berenice, Maximin's wife; then a sudden catastrophe, three deaths, and the triumph of the good people, who get married and interchange polite phrases. Such is this tragedy, which is called French-like; and most of the others are like it. In *Secret Love*, in *Marriage à la Mode*, in *Aureng-Zebe*, in the *Indian Emperor*, and especially in the *Conquest of Granada*, everything is extravagant. People cut one another to pieces, take towns, stab each other, shout lustily. These dramas have just the truth and naturalness of the libretto of an opera. Incantations abound; a spirit appears in the *Indian Emperor*, and declares that the Indian gods "are driven to exile from their native lands." Ballets are also there; Vasquez and Pizarro, seated in "a pleasant grotto," watch like conquerors the dances of the Indian girls, who gambol voluptuously about them. Scenes worthy of Lulli¹ are not wanting; Almeria, like Armide, comes to slay Cortez in his sleep, and suddenly falls in love with him. Yet the libretti of the opera have no incongruities; they avoid all which might shock the imagination or the eyes; they are written for men of taste, who shun ugliness and heaviness of any sort. Would you believe it? In the *Indian Emperor*, Montezuma is tortured on the stage, and to cap all, a priest tries to convert him in the meanwhile.²

¹ Lulli (1633-1687), a renowned Italian composer. *Armide* is one of his chief works.—Tr.

² *Christian Priest*. But we by martyrdom our faith avow.

Montezuma. You do no more than I for ours do now.

To prove religion true,
If either wit or sufferings would suffice,

I recognise in this frightful pedantry the handsome cavaliers of the time, logicians and hangmen, who fed on controversy, and for the sake of amusement went to look at the tortures of the Puritans. I recognise behind these heaps of improbabilities and adventures the puerile and worn-out courtiers, who, sodden with wine, were past seeing incongruities, and whose nerves were only stirred by startling surprises and barbarous events.

Let us go still further. Dryden would set up on his stage the beauties of French tragedy, and in the first place its nobility of sentiment. Is it enough to copy, as he does, phrases of chivalry? He would need a whole world, for a whole world is necessary to form noble souls. Virtue, in the French tragic poets, is based on reason, religion, education, philosophy. Their characters have that uprightness of mind, that clearness of logic, that lofty judgment, which plant in a man settled maxims and self-government. We perceive in their company the doctrines of Bossuet and Descartes; with them, reflection aids conscience; the habits of society add tact and *finesse*. The avoidance of violent actions and physical horrors, the meed and order of the fable, the art of disguising or shunning coarse or low persons, the continuous perfection of the most measured and noble style, everything contributes

All faiths afford the constant and the wise,
And yet even they, by education sway'd,
In age defend what infancy obeyed.

Christian Priest. Since age by erring childhood is misled,
Refer yourself to our unerring head.

Montezuma. Man, and not err! what reason can you give!

Christian Priest. Renounce that carnal reason, and believe. . .

Pizarro. Increase their pains, the cords are yet too slack.

—*The Indian Emperor*, v. 2.

to raise the stage to a sublime region, and we believe in higher souls by seeing them in a purer air. Can we believe in them in Dryden? Frightful or infamous characters every instant drag us down by their coarse expressions in their own mire. Maximin, having stabbed Placidius, sits on his body, stabs him twice more, and says to the guards :

“Bring me Porphyrius and my empress dead :—
I would brave heaven, in my each hand a head.”¹

Nourmahal, repulsed by her husband's son, insists four times, using such indecent and pedantic words as the following :

“And why this niceness to that pleasure shown,
Where nature sums up all her joys in one. . . .
Promiscuous love is nature's general law ;
For whosoever the first lovers were,
Brother and sister made the second pair,
And doubled by their love their piety. . . .
You must be mine, that you may learn to live.”²

¹ *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 5. 1. When dying Maximin says : “And shoving back this earth on which I sit, I'll mount, and scatter all the Gods I hit.”

² *Aureng-Zebe*, v. 4. 1. Dryden thought he was imitating Racine, when six lines further on he makes Nourmahal say :

“I am not changed, I love my husband still ;
But love him as he was, when youthful grace
And the first down began to shade his face :
That image does my virgin-flames renew,
And all your father shines more bright in you.”

Racine's Phèdre (2. 5) thinks her husband Theseus dead, and says to her stepson Hippolytus ;

“Oui, prince, je languis, je brûle pour Thésée :
Je l'aime . . .
Mais fidèle, mais fier, et même un peu farouche,
Charmant, jeune, traînant tous les cœurs après soi,
Tel qu'on dépeint nos dieux, ou tel que je vous voi.

Illusion vanishes at once ; instead of being in a room with noble characters, we meet with a mad prostitute and a drunken savage. When we lift the masks the others are little better. Almeria, to whom a crown is offered, says insolently :

"I take this garland, not as given by you,
But as my merit, and my beauty's due."¹

Indamora, to whom an old courtier makes love, settles him with the boastfulness of an upstart and the coarseness of a kitchen-maid :

"Were I no queen, did you my beauty weigh,
My youth in bloom, your age in its decay."²

None of these heroines know how to conduct themselves ; they look on impertinence as dignity, sensuality as tenderness ; they have the recklessness of the courtesan, the jealousies of the grisette, the pettiness of a chapman's wife, the billingsgate of a fishwoman. The heroes are the most unpleasant of swashbucklers. Leonidas, first recognised as hereditary prince, then suddenly forsaken, consoles himself with this modest reflection :

"'Tis true I am alone.
So was the godhead, ere he made the world,
And better served himself than served by nature.
. . . I have scene enough within
To exercise my virtue."³

Shall I speak of that great trumpet-blower Almanzor,

Il avait votre port, vos yeux, votre langage ;
Cette noble pudeur colorait son visage."

According to a note in Sir Walter Scott's edition of Dryden's works, Langbaine traces this speech also to Seneca's *Hippolytus*.—Tz.

¹ *The Indian Emperor*, i. 2.

² *Aureng-Zebe*, v. 2, 1.

³ *Marriage à la Mode*, iv. 3. 1.

painted, as Dryden confesses, after Artaban,¹ a redresser of wrongs, a battalion-smiter, a destroyer of kingdoms?² We find nothing but overcharged sentiments, sudden devotedness, exaggerated generosities, high-sounding bathos of a clumsy chivalry; at bottom the characters are clods and barbarians, who have tried to deck themselves in French honour and fashionable politeness. And such, in fact, was the English court: it imitated that of Louis XIV. as a sign-painter imitates an artist. It had neither taste nor refinement, and wished to appear as if it possessed them. Panders and licentious women, ruffianly or butchering courtiers, who went to see Harrison drawn, or to mutilate Coventry, maids of honour who have awkward accidents at a ball,³ or sell to the planters the convicts presented to them, a palace full of baying dogs and bawling gamesters, a king who would bandy obscenities in public with his half-naked mistresses,⁴—such was this illustrious society; from French modes they took but dress, from French noble sentiments but high-sounding words.

¹ The first image I had of him was from the Achilles of Homer, the next from Tasso's Rinaldo, and the third from the Artaban of Monsieur Calpranède."—Preface to *Almanzor*.

² "The Moors have heaven, and me, to assist their cause" (l. 1).

"I'll whistle thy tame fortune after me" (3. 1).

He falls in love, and speaks thus

"Tis he; I feel him now in every part;
Like a new lord he vaunts about my heart,
Surveys in state each corner of my breast,
While poor fierce I, that was, am disposess'd" (3. 1).

³ See vol. ii. 341.

⁴ Compare the song of the Zambra dance in the first part of *Almanzor and Almahide*, 3. 1.

IV.

The second point worthy of imitation in classical tragedy is the style. Dryden, in fact, purifies his own, and renders it more clear, by introducing close reasoning and precise words. He has oratorical discussions like Corneille, well-delivered retorts, symmetrical, like carefully parried arguments. He has maxims vigorously enclosed in the compass of a single line, distinctions, developments, and the whole art of special pleading. He has happy antitheses, ornamental epithets, finely-wrought comparisons, and all the artifices of the literary mind. What is most striking is, that he abandons that kind of verse specially appropriated to the English drama which is without rhyme, and the mixture of prose and verse common to the old authors, for a rhymed tragedy like the French, fancying that he is thus inventing a new species, which he calls heroic play. But in this transformation the good perished, the bad remains. For rhyme differs in different races. To an Englishman it resembles a song, and transports him at once to an ideal and fairy world. To a Frenchman it is only a conventionalism or an expediency, and transports him at once to an ante-chamber or a drawing-room; to him it is an ornamental dress and nothing more; if it mars prose, it ennobles it; it imposes respect, not enthusiasm, and changes a vulgar into a high-bred style. Moreover, in French aristocratic verse everything is connected; pedantry, logical machinery of every kind, is excluded from it; there is nothing more disagreeable to well-bred and refined persons than the scholastic rust. Images are rare, but always well kept up; bold poesy, real fantasy, have no place in it; their brilliancy and divergencies would derange the politeness and regular flow of

the social world. The right word, the prominence of free expressions, are not to be met with in it; general terms, always rather threadbare, suit best the caution and niceties of select society. Dryden sins heavily against all these rules. His rhymes, to an Englishman's ear, scatter at once the whole illusion of the stage; they see that the characters who speak thus are but squeaking puppets; he himself admits that his heroic tragedy is only fit to represent on the stage chivalric poems like those of Ariosto and Spenser.

Poetic dash gives the finishing stroke to all likelihood. Would we recognise the dramatic accent in this epic comparison?

"As some fair tulip, by a storm oppress'd
Shrinks up, and folds its silken arms to rest;
And, bending to the blast, all pale and dead,
Hears, from within, the wind sing round its head,—
So, shrouded up, your beauty disappears:
Unveil, my love, and lay aside your fears,
The storm, that caused your fright, is pass'd and done."¹

What a singular triumphal song are these *conceits* of Cortez as he lands:

"On what new happy climate are we thrown,
So long kept secret, and so lately known?
As if our old world modestly withdrew,
And here in private had brought forth a new."²

Think how these patches of colour would contrast with the sober design of French dissertation. Here lovers vie with each other in metaphors; there a wooer, in order to magnify the beauties of his mistress, says that

¹ The first part of *Almansor and Almahide*, iv. 5. 2.

² *The Indian Emperor*, ii. 1. 1.

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EDWARD S-ENSER



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"bloody hearts lie panting in her hand." In every page harsh or vulgar words spoil the regularity of a noble style. Ponderous logic is broadly displayed in the speeches of princesses. "Two ifs," says Lyndaraxa, "scarce make one possibility."¹ Dryden sets his college cap on the heads of these poor women. Neither he nor his characters are well brought up; they have taken from the French but the outer garb of the bar and the schools; they have left behind symmetrical eloquence, measured diction, elegance and delicacy. A while before, the licentious coarseness of the Restoration pierced the mask of the fine sentiments with which it was covered; now the rude English imagination breaks the oratorical mould in which it tried to enclose itself.

Let us look at the other side of the picture. Dryden would keep the foundation of the old English drama, and retains the abundance of events, the variety of plot, the unforeseen accidents, and the physical representation of bloody or violent action. He kills as many people as Shakspeare. Unfortunately, all poets are not justified in killing. When they take their spectators among murders and sudden accidents, they ought to have a hundred hidden preparations. Fancy a sort of rapture and romantic folly, a most daring style, eccentric and poetical, songs, pictures, reveries spoken aloud, frank scorn of all verisimilitude, a mixture of tenderness, philosophy, and mockery, all the retiring charms of varied feelings, all the whims of nimble fancy; the truth of events matters little. No one who ever saw *Cymbeline*

¹ The first part of *Almanzor and Almahide*, iv. 2. 1. This same Lyndaraxa says also to Abdalla (4. 2), "Poor women's thoughts are all *adtempore*." These logical ladies can be very coarse; for example, this same damsel says in act 2. 1, to the same lover, who entreats her to make him "happy," "If I make you so, you shall pay my price."

or *As you Like it* looked at these plays with the eyes of a politician or a historian ; no one took these military processions, these accessions of princes, seriously ; the spectators were present at dissolving views. They did not demand that things should proceed after the laws of nature ; on the contrary, they willingly did require that they should proceed against the laws of nature. The irrationality is the charm. That new world must be all imagination ; if it was only so by halves, no one would care to rise to it. This is why we do not rise to Dryden's. A queen dethroned, then suddenly set up again ; a tyrant who finds his lost son, is deceived, adopts a girl in his place ; a young prince led to punishment, who snatches the sword of a guard, and recovers his crown : such are the romances which constitute the *Maiden Queen* and the *Marriage à la Mode*. We can imagine what a display classical dissertations make in this medley ; solid reason beats down imagination, stroke after stroke, to the ground. We cannot tell if the matter be a true portrait or a fancy painting ; we remain suspended between truth and fancy ; we should like either to get up to heaven or down to earth, and we jump down as quick as possible from the clumsy scaffolding where the poet would perch us.

On the other hand, when Shakspeare wishes to impress a doctrine, not raise a dream, he attunes us to it beforehand, but after another fashion. We naturally remain in doubt before a cruel action : we divine that the red irons which are about to put out the eyes of little Arthur are painted sticks, and that the six rascals who besiege Rome, are supernumeraries hired at a shilling a night. To conquer this mistrust we must employ the most natural style, circumstantial and rude

imitation of the manners of the guardroom and of the alehouse ; I can only believe in Jack Cade's sedition on hearing the dirty words of bestial lewdness and mobbish stupidity. You must let me have the jests, the coarse laughter, drunkenness, the manners of butchers and tanners, to make me imagine a mob or an election. So in murders, let me feel the fire of bubbling passion, the accumulation of despair or hate which have unchained the will and nerved the hand. When the unchecked words, the fits of rage, the convulsive ejaculations of exasperated desire, have brought me in contact with all the links of the inward necessity which has moulded the man and guided the crime, I no longer think whether the knife is bloody, because I feel with inner trembling the passion which has handled it. Have I to see if Shakspeare's Cleopatra be really dead ? The strange laugh that bursts from her when the basket of asps is brought, the sudden tension of nerves, the flow of feverish words, the fitful gaiety, the coarse language, the torrent of ideas with which she overflows, have already made me sound all the depths of suicide,¹

¹ "He words me, girls ; he words me, that I should not
Be noble to myself ; but hark thee Charmian. . . .

Now, Iras, what think'st thou ?

Thou, an Egyptian puppet shalt be shown
In Rome, as well as I : mechanic slaves,
With greasy aprons, rules and hammers, shall
Uplift us to the view. . . .

Saucy lictors

Will catch at us, like strumpets ; and scald rhymers
Ballad us out o' tune ; the quick comedians
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels ; Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' the posture of a whore. . . .

and I have foreseen it as soon as she came on the stage. This madness of the imagination, incited by climate and despotic power; these woman's, queen's, prostitute's nerves; this marvellous self-abandonment to all the fire of invention and desire—these cries, tears, foam on the lips, tempest of insults, actions, emotions; this promptitude to murder, announce the rage with which she would rush against the least obstacle and be dashed to pieces. What does Dryden effect in this matter with his written phrases? What of the maid speaking, in the author's words, who bids her half-mad mistress "call reason to assist you?"¹ What of such a Cleopatra as his, designed after Lady Castlemaine,² skilled in

Husband, I come :

Now to that name my courage prove my title!

I am fire and air ; my other elements

I give to baser life. So ; have you done ?

Come, then, and take the last warmth of my lips.

Farewell, kind Charmian ; Iras, long farewell. . . .

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,

That sucks the nurse asleep !"

Shakspeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, 5. 2.

These two last lines, referring to the asp, are sublime as the bitter joke of a courtesan and an artist.

¹ " *Iras*. Call reason to assist you.

Cleopatra. I have none,

And none would have : My love's a noble madness

Which shews the cause deserved it : Modest sorrow

Fits vulgar love, and for a vulgar man ;

But I have loved with such transcendant passion,

I soared, at first, quite out of reason's view,

And now am lost above it." — *All for Love*, v. 2. 1.

² " *Cleop*. Come to me, come, my soldier, to my arms !

You've been too long away from my embraces ;

But, when I have you fast, and all my own,

With broken murmurs, and with amorous sighs,

I'll say, you were unkind, and punish you,

And mark you red with many an eager kiss." —

All for Love, v. 2. 2.

artifices and whimpering, voluptuous and a coquette, with neither the nobleness of virtue, nor the greatness of crime :

" Nature meant me
A wife ; a silly, harmless household dove,
Fond without art, and kind without deceit." ¹

Nay, Nature meant nothing of the kind, or otherwise this turtle-dove would not have tamed or kept an Antony ; a woman without any prejudices alone could do it, by the superiority of boldness and the fire of genius. I can see already from the title of the piece why Dryden has softened Shakspeare : *All for Love ; or, the World well Lost*. What a wretchedness, to reduce such events to a pastoral, to excuse Antony, to praise Charles II. indirectly, to bleat as in a sheepfold ! And such was the taste of his contemporaries. When Dryden wrote the *Tempest* after Shakspeare, and the *State of Innocence* after Milton, he again spoiled the ideas of his masters ; he turned Eve and Miranda into courtesans ;² he extinguished everywhere, under conventionalism and indecencies, the frankness, severity, delicacy, and charm of the original invention. By his side, Settle, Shadwell, Sir Robert Howard did worse. *The Empress of Morocco*, by Settle, was so admired, that the gentlemen and ladies of the court learned it by heart, to play at Whitehall before the king. And this was not a passing fancy ; although modified, the taste was to endure. In

¹ *All for Love*, 4. 1.

² Dryden's Miranda, says, in the *Tempest* (2. 2) : " And if I can but escape with life, I had rather be in pain nine months, as my father threatened, than lose my longing." Miranda has a sister ; they quarrel, are jealous of each other, and so on. See also in *The State of Innocence*, 3. 1, the description which Eve gives of her happiness, and the ideas which her confidences suggest to Satan.

vain poets rejected a part of the French alloy where-with they had mixed their native metal; in vain they returned to the old unrhymed verses of Jonson and Shakspeare; in vain Dryden, in the parts of Antony, Ventidius, Octavia, Don Sebastian, and Dorax, recovered a portion of the old naturalness and energy; in vain Otway, who had real dramatic talent, Lee and Southern, attained a true or touching accent, so that once, in *Venice Preserved*, it was thought that the drama would be regenerated. The drama was dead, and tragedy could not replace it; or rather each one died by the other; and their union, which robbed them of strength in Dryden's time, enervated them also in the time of his successors. Literary style blunted dramatic truth; dramatic truth marred literary style; the work was neither sufficiently vivid nor sufficiently well written; the author was too little of a poet or of an orator; he had neither Shakspeare's fire of imagination nor Racine's polish and art.¹ He strayed on the boundaries of two dramas, and suited neither the half-barbarous men of art nor the well-polished men of the court. Such indeed was the audience, hesitating between two forms of thought, fed by two opposite civilisations. They had no longer the freshness of feelings, the depth of impression, the bold originality and poetic folly of the cavaliers and adventurers of the Renaissance; nor will they ever acquire the aptness of speech, gentleness of manners, courtly habits, and cultivation of sentiment and thought which adorned the court of Louis XIV. They are quitting the age of solitary imagination and invention, which suits their race, for the age of reasoning and worldly conversation, which does not suit their race;

¹ This impotence reminds one of Casimir Delavigne.

they lose their own merits, and do not acquire the merits of others. They were meagre poets and ill-bred courtiers, having lost the art of imagination and having not yet acquired good manners, at times dull or brutal, at times emphatic or stiff. For the production of fine poetry, race and age must concur. This race, diverging from its own age, and fettered at the outset by foreign imitation, formed its classical literature but slowly; it will only attain it after transforming its religious and political condition: the age will be that of English reason. Dryden inaugurates it by his other works, and the writers who appear in the reign of Queen Anne will give it its completion, its authority, and its splendour.

V.

But let us pause a moment longer to inquire whether, amid so many abortive and distorted branches, the old theatrical stock, abandoned by chance to itself, will not produce at some point a sound and living shoot. When a man like Dryden, so gifted, so well informed and experienced, works with a will, there is hope that he will some time succeed; and once, in part at least, Dryden did succeed. It would be treating him unjustly to be always comparing him with Shakspeare; but even on Shakspeare's ground, with the same materials, it is possible to create a fine work; only the reader must forget for a while the great inventor, the inexhaustible creator of vehement and original souls, and to consider the imitator on his own merits, without forcing an overwhelming comparison.

There is vigour and art in this tragedy of Dryden, *All for Love*. "He has informed us, that this was the

only play written to please himself.”¹ And he had really composed it learnedly, according to history and logic. And what is better still, he wrote it in a manly style. In the preface he says: “The fabric of the play is regular enough, as to the inferior parts of it; and the unities of time, place, and action, more exactly observed, than perhaps the English theatre requires. Particularly, the action is so much one, that it is the only of the kind without episode, or underplot; every scene in the tragedy conducing to the main design, and every act concluding with a turn of it.”² He did more; he abandoned the French ornaments, and returned to national tradition: “In my style I have professed to imitate the divine Shakspeare; which that I might perform more freely, I have disincumbered myself from rhyme. . . . Yet, I hope, I may affirm, and without vanity, that by imitating him, I have excelled myself throughout the play; and particularly, that I prefer the scene betwixt Antony and Ventidius in the first act, to anything which I have written in this kind.”³ Dryden was right; if Cleopatra is weak, if this feebleness of conception takes away the interest and mars the general effect, if the new rhetoric and the old emphasis at times suspend the emotion and destroy the likelihood, yet on the whole the drama stands erect, and what is more, moves on. The poet is skilful; he has planned, he knows how to construct a scene, to represent the internal struggle by which two passions contend for a human heart. We perceive the tragical vicissitude of the strife, the progress of a sentiment, the overthrow of obstacles, the slow growth of desire or wrath, to the very instant when the

¹ See the introductory notice, by Sir Walter Scott, of *All for Love*, v. 290.

² *Ibid.* v. 307.

³ *Ibid.* v. 319.

resolution, rising up of itself or seduced from without, rushes suddenly in one groove. There are natural words; the poet thinks and writes too genuinely not to discover them at need. There are manly characters: he himself is a man; and beneath his courtier's pliability, his affectations as a fashionable poet, he has retained his stern and energetic character. Except for one scene of recrimination, his Octavia is a Roman matron; and when, even in Alexandria, in Cleopatra's palace, she comes to look for Antony, she does it with a simplicity and nobility, not to be surpassed. "Cæsar's sister," cries out Antony, accosting her. Octavia answers;

"That's unkind.

Had I been nothing more than Cæsar's sister,
 Know, I had still remain'd in Cæsar's camp:
 But your Octavia, your much injured wife,
 Though banish'd from your bed, driven from your house,
 In spite of Cæsar's sister, still is yours.
 'Tis true, I have a heart disdains your coldness,
 And prompts me not to seek what you should offer;
 But a wife's virtue still surmounts that pride.
 I come to claim you as my own; to show
 My duty first, to ask, nay beg, your kindness:
 Your hand, my lord; 'tis mine, and I will have it."¹

Antony humiliated, refuses the pardon Octavia has brought him, and tells her:

"I fear, Octavia, you have begg'd my life, . . .
 Poorly and basely begg'd it of your brother.
Octavia. Poorly and basely I could never beg,
 Nor could my brother grant. . . .
 My hard fortune
 Subjects me still to your unkind mistakes.

¹ *All for Love*, v. 2. 1.

But the conditions I have brought are such,
You need not blush to take : I love your honour,
Because 'tis mine ; it never shall be said
Octavia's husband was her brother's slave.
Sir, you are free ; free, even from her you loath ;
For, though my brother bargains for your love,
Makes me the price and cement of your peace,
I have a soul like yours ; I cannot take
Your love as alms, nor beg what I deserve.
I'll tell my brother we are reconciled ;
He shall draw back his troops, and you shall march
To rule the East : I may be dropt at Athens ;
No matter where. I never will complain,
But only keep the barren name of wife,
And rid you of the trouble."¹

This is lofty ; this woman has a proud heart, and also a wife's heart : she knows how to give and how to bear ; and better, she knows how to sacrifice herself without self-assertion, and calmly ; no vulgar mind conceived such a soul as this. And Ventidius, the old general, who with her and previous to her, comes to rescue Antony from his illusion and servitude, is worthy to speak in behalf of honour, as she had spoken for duty. Doubtless he was a plebeian, a rude and plain-speaking soldier, with the frankness and jests of his profession sometimes clumsy, such as a clever eunuch can dupe, "a thick-skulled hero," who, out of simplicity of soul, from the coarseness of his training, unsuspectingly brings Antony back to the meshes, which he seemed to be breaking through. Falling into a trap, he tells Antony that he has seen Cleopatra unfaithful with Dolabella :

¹ *All for Love*, v. 3. 1.

Antony. My Cleopatra!

Ventidius. Your Cleopatra.

Dolabella's Cleopatra.

Every man's Cleopatra.

Antony. Thou liest.

Ventidius. I do not lie, my lord.

Is this so strange? Should mistresses be left,

And not provide against a time of change?

You know she's not much used to lonely nights."¹

It was just the way to make Antony jealous and bring him back furious to Cleopatra. But what a noble heart has this Ventidius, and how we catch, when he is alone with Antony, the manly voice, the deep tones which had been heard on the battlefield! He loves his general like a good and honest dog, and asks no better than to die, so it be at his master's feet. He growls stealthily on seeing him cast down, crouches round him, and suddenly weeps:

Ventidius. Look, emperor, this is no common dew. [*Weeping.*
I have not wept this forty years; but now
My mother comes afresh into my eyes,
I cannot help her softness.

Antony. By Heaven, he weeps! poor, good old man, he weeps!
The big round drops course one another down
The furrows of his cheeks.—Stop them, Ventidius,
Or I shall blush to death: they set my shame,
That caused them full before me.

Ventidius. I'll do my best.

Antony. Sure there's contagion in the tears of friends:
See, I have caught it too. Believe me, 'tis not
For my own grief, but thine. Nay, Father!"²

¹ *All for Love*, 4. 1.

² *Ibid.* 1. 1.

As we hear these terrible sobs, we think of Tacitus' veterans, who escaping from the marshes of Germany, with scarred breasts, white heads, limbs stiff with service, kissed the hands of Drusus, carried his fingers to their gums, that he might feel their worn and loosened teeth, incapable to bite the wretched bread which was given to them :

" No ; 'tis you dream ; you sleep away your hours
In desperate sloth, miscall'd philosophy.
Up, up, for honour's sake ; twelve legions wait you,
And long to call you chief : By painful journies,
I led them, patient both of heat and hunger,
Down from the Parthian marshes to the Nile.
'Twill do you good to see their sun-burnt faces,
Their scarred cheeks, and chopt hands ; there's virtue in them.
They'll sell those mangled limbs at dearer rates
Than yon trim bands can buy." ¹

And when all is lost, when the Egyptians have turned traitors, and there is nothing left but to die well, Ventidius says ;

" There yet remain
Three legions in the town. The last assault
Lopt off the rest : if death be your design,—
As I must wish it now,—these are sufficient
To make a heap about us of dead foes,
An honest pile for burial. . . . Chuse your death ;
For, I have seen him in such various shapes,
I care not which I take : I'm only troubled.
The life I bear is worn to such a rag,
'Tis scarce worth giving. I could wish, indeed,
We threw it from us with a better grace ;

¹ *All for Love*, 1. 1.

That, like two lions taken in the toils,
 We might at least thrust out our paws, and wound
 The hunters that inclose us." ¹ . . .

Antony begs him to go, but he refuses ; and then he
 entreats Ventidius to kill him :

Antony. Do not deny me twice.

Ventidius. By Heaven I will not.

Let it not be to outlive you.

Antony. Kill me first,

And then die thou ; for 'tis but just thou serve
 Thy friend, before thyself.

Ventidius. Give me your hand.

We soon shall meet again. Now, farewell, emperor !

[*Embraces.*

. . . I will not make a business of a trifle :

And yet I cannot look on you, and kill you.

Pray, turn your face.

Antony. I do : strike home, be sure.

Ventidius. Home, as my sword will reach." ²

And with one blow he kills himself. These are the
 tragic, stoical manners of a military monarchy, the great
 profusion of murders and sacrifices wherewith the men
 of this overturned and shattered society killed and died.
 This Antony, for whom so much has been done, is not
 undeserving of their love : he has been one of Cæsar's
 heroes, the first soldier of the van ; kindness and gen-
 erosity breathe from him to the last ; if he is weak
 against a woman, he is strong against men ; he has the
 muscles and heart, the wrath and passions of a soldier ;
 it is this feverheat of blood, this too quick sentiment of
 honour, which has caused his ruin ; he cannot forgive
 his own crime ; he possesses not that lofty genius which,

¹ *All for Love*, 5. 1.

² *Ibid.*

dwelling in a region superior to ordinary rules, emancipates a man from hesitation, from discouragement and remorse; he is only a soldier, he cannot forget that he has not executed the orders given to him :

Ventidius. Emperor !

Antony. Emperor ! Why, that's the style of victory ;
The conquering soldier, red with unfelt wounds,
Salutes his general so ; but never more
Shall that sound reach my ears.

Ventidius. I warrant you.

Antony. Actium, Actium ! Oh——

Ventidius. It sits too near you.

Antony. Here, here it lies ; a lump of lead by day ;
And in my short, distracted, nightly slumbers,
The hag that rides my dreams. . . .

Ventidius. That's my royal master ;
And, shall we fight ?

Antony. I warrant thee, old soldier.
Thou shalt behold me once again in iron ;
And at the head of our old troops, that beat
The Parthians, cry aloud, ' Come, follow me.' ”¹

He fancies himself on the battlefield, and already his impetuosity carries him away. Such a man is not fit to govern men ; we cannot master fortune until we have mastered ourselves ; this man is only made to belie and destroy himself, and to be veered round alternately by every passion. As soon as he believes Cleopatra faithful, honour, reputation, empire, everything vanishes :

Ventidius. And what's this toy,
In balance with your fortune, honour, fame ?

¹ *All for Love*, 1. 1.

Antony. What is't, Ventidius ? it outweighs them all.
 Why, we have more than conquer'd Cæsar now.
 My queen's not only innocent, but loves me. . . .
 Down on thy knees, blasphemer as thou art,
 And ask forgiveness of wrong'd innocence !

Ventidius. I'll rather die than take it. Will you go ?

Antony. Go ! Whither ? Go from all that's excellent !
 . . . Give, you gods,
 Give to your boy, your Cæsar,
 This rattle of a globe to play withal,
 This gewgaw world ; and put him cheaply off :
 I'll not be pleased with less than Cleopatra."¹

Dejection follows excess ; these souls are only tempered against fear ; their courage is but that of the bull and the lion ; to be fully themselves, they need bodily action, visible danger ; their temperament sustains them ; before great moral sufferings they give way. When Antony thinks himself deceived, he despairs, and has nothing left but to die :

“ Let him (Cæsar) walk
 Alone upon't. I'm weary of my part.
 My torch is out ; and the world stands before me,
 Like a black desert at the approach of night ;
 I'll lay me down, and stray no farther on.”²

Such verses remind us of Othello's gloomy dreams, of Macbeth's, of Hamlet's even ; beyond the pile of swelling tirades and characters of painted cardboard, it is as though the poet had touched the ancient drama, and brought its emotion away with him.

By his side another also has felt it, a young man, a

¹ *All for Love*, 2. 1, end.

² *Ibid.* 5. 1.

poor adventurer, by turns a student, actor, officer, always wild and always poor, who lived madly and sadly in excess and misery, like the old dramatists, with their inspiration, their fire, and who died at the age of thirty-four, according to some of a fever caused by fatigue, according to others of a prolonged fast, at the end of which he swallowed too quickly a morsel of bread bestowed on him in charity. Through the pompous cloak of the new rhetoric, Thomas Otway now and then reached the passions of the other age. It is plain that the times he lived in marred him, that he blunted himself the harshness and truth of the emotion he felt, that he no longer mastered the bold words he needed, that the oratorical style, the literary phrases, the classical declamation, the well-poised antitheses, buzzed about him, and drowned his note in their sustained and monotonous hum. Had he but been born a hundred years earlier! In his *Orphan* and *Venice Preserved* we encounter the sombre imaginations of Webster, Ford, and Shakspeare, their gloomy idea of life, their atrocities, murders, pictures of irresistible passions, which riot blindly like a herd of savage beasts, and make a chaos of the battlefield, with their yells and tumult, leaving behind them but devastation and heaps of dead. Like Shakspeare, he represents on the stage human transports and rages—a brother violating his brother's wife, a husband perjuring himself for his wife; Polydore, Chamont, Jaffier, weak and violent souls, the sport of chance, the prey of temptation, with whom transport or crime, like poison poured into the veins, gradually ascends, envenoms the whole man, is communicated to all whom he touches, and contorts and casts them down together in a convulsive delirium. Like Shakspeare, he has found

poignant and living words,¹ which lay bare the depths of humanity, the strange creaking of a machine which is getting out of order, the tension of the will stretched to breaking-point,² the simplicity of real sacrifice, the humility of exasperated and craving passion, which begs to the end, and against all hope, for its fuel and its gratification.³ Like Shakspeare, he has conceived genuine women,⁴—Monimia, above all Belvidera, who, like Imogen, has given herself wholly, and is lost as in an abyss of adoration for him whom she has chosen, who can but love, obey, weep, suffer, and who dies like a flower plucked from the stalk, when her arms are torn from the neck around which she has locked them. Like Shakspeare again, he has found, at least once, the grand bitter buffoonery, the harsh sentiment of human baseness; and he has introduced into his most painful tragedy, an impure caricature, an old senator, who unbends from his official gravity in order to play at his mistress' house the clown or the valet. How bitter!

¹ Monimia says, in the *Orphan* (5, end), when dying, "How my head swims! 'Tis very dark; good night."

² See the death of Pierre and Jaffier in *Venice Preserved* (5, last scene). Pierre, stabbed once, bursts into a laugh.

³ "Jaffier. Oh, that my arms were rivetted
Thus round thee ever! But my friends, my oath!
This, and no more. (Kisses her).

Belvidera. Another, sure another
For that poor little one you've ta'en such care of;
I'll giv't him truly."—*Venice Preserved*, 5. 1.

There is jealousy in this last word.

⁴ "Oh, thou art tender all,
Gentle and kind, as sympathizing nature,
Dove-like, soft and kind. . . .
I'll ever live your most obedient wife,
Nor ever any privilege pretend
Beyond your will."—*Orphan*, 4. 1.

how true was his conception, in making the busy man eager to leave his robes and his ceremonies ! how ready the man is to abase himself, when, escaped from his part, he comes to his real self ! how the ape and the dog crop up in him ! The senator Antonio comes to his Aquilina, who insults him ; he is amused ; hard words are a relief to compliments ; he speaks in a shrill voice, runs into a falsetto like a zany at a country fair :

“Antonio. Nacky, Nacky, Nacky,—how dost do, Nacky ! Hurry, durry. I am come, little Nacky. Past eleven o’clock, a late hour ; time in all conscience to go to bed, Nacky.—Nacky did I say ? Ay, Nacky, Aquilina, lina, lina, quilina ; Aquilina, Naquilina, Acky, Nacky, queen Nacky.—Come, let’s to bed.—You fubba, you pug you—You little puss.—Purree tuzzy—I am a senator.

Aquilina. You are a fool I am sure.

Antonio. May be so too, sweet-heart. Never the worse senator for all that. Come, Nacky, Nacky ; let’s have a game at romp, Nacky ! . . . You won’t sit down ? Then look you now ; suppose me a bull, a Basan-bull, the bull of bulls, or any bull. Thus up I get, and with my brows thus bent—I broo ; I say I broo, I broo, I broo. You won’t sit down, will you—I broo. . . . Now, I’ll be a senator again, and thy lover, little Nicky, Nacky. Ah, toad, toad, toad, toad, spit in my face a little, Nacky ; spit in my face, pry’thee, spit in my face, never so little ; spit but a little bit,—spit, spit, spit, spit when you are bid, I say ; do pry’thee, spit.—Now, now spit. What, you won’t spit, will you ? Then I’ll be a dog.

Aquilina. A dog, my lord !

Antonio. Ay a dog, and I’ll give thee this t’other purse to let me be a dog—and to use me like a dog a little. Hurry durry, I will—here ’tis. (Gives the purse.) . . . Now bough waugh waugh, bough, bough, waugh.

Aquilina. Hold, hold, sir. If curs bite, they must be kicked, sir. Do you see, kicked thus?

Antonio. Ay, with all my heart. Do, kick, kick on, now I am under the table, kick again,—kick harder—harder yet—bough, waugh, waugh, bough.—Odd, Ill have a snap at thy shins.—Bough, waugh, waugh, waugh, bough—odd, she kicks bravely.”¹

At last she takes a whip, thrashes him soundly, and turns him out of the house. He will return, we may be sure of that; he has spent a pleasant evening; he rubs his back, but he was amused. In short, he was but a clown who had missed his vocation, whom chance has given an embroidered silk gown, and who turns out at so much an hour political harlequinades. He feels more natural, more at his ease, playing Punch than aping a statesman.

These are but gleams: for the most part Otway is a poet of his time, dull and forced in colour; buried, like the rest, in the heavy, grey, clouded atmosphere, half English and half French, in which the bright lights brought over from France, are snuffed out by the insular fogs. He is a man of his time; like the rest, he writes obscene comedies, *The Soldier's Fortune*, *The Atheist*, *Friendship in Fashion*. He depicts coarse and vicious cavaliers, rogues on principle, as harsh and corrupt as those of Wycherley, Beaugard, who vaunts and practises the maxims of Hobbes; the father, an old, corrupt rascal, who brags of his morality, and whom his son coldly sends to the dogs with a bag of crowns: Sir Jolly Jumble, a kind of base

¹ *Venice Preserved*, 3. 1. Antonio is meant as a copy of the “celebrated Earl of Shaftesbury, the lewdness of whose latter years,” says Mr. Thornton in his edition of Otway's Works, 3 vols. 1815, “was a subject of general notoriety.”—Tz.

Falstaff, a pander by profession, whom the courtesans call "papa, daddy," who, "if he sits but at the table with one, he'll be making nasty figures in the napkins:"¹ Sir Davy Duncce, a disgusting animal, "who has such a breath, one kiss of him were enough to cure the fits of the mother; 'tis worse than assafoetida. Clean linen, he says, is unwholesome . . . ; he is continually eating of garlic, and chewing tobacco;"² Polydore, who, enamoured of his father's ward, tries to force her in the first scene, envies the brutes, and makes up his mind to imitate them on the next occasion.³ Otway defiles even his heroines.⁴ Truly this society sickens us. They thought to cover all their filth with fine correct meta-

¹ *The Soldier's Fortune*, 1. 1.

² *Ibid.*

³ "Who'd be that sordid foolish thing called man,
To cringe thus, fawn, and flatter for a pleasure,
Which beasts enjoy so very much above him?
The lusty bull ranges thro' all the field,
And from the herd singling his female out,
Enjoys her, and abandons her at will.
It shall be so, I'll yet possess my love,
Wait on, and watch her loose unguarded hours:
Then, when her roving thoughts have been abroad,
And brought in wanton wishes to her heart;
I' th' very minute when her virtue nods,
I'll rush upon her in a storm of love,
Beat down her guard of honour all before me,
Surfeit on joys, till ev'n desire grew sick;
Then by long absence liberty regain,
And quite forget the pleasure and the pain."—*The Orphan*, 1. 1.
It is impossible to see together more moral roguery and literary correctness.

⁴ "Page (to Monimia). In the morning when you call me to you,
And by your bed I stand and tell you stories,
I am ashamed to see your swelling breasts;
It makes me blush, they are so very white.
Monimia. Oh men, for flatt'ry and deceit renown'd!"
—*The Orphan*, 1. 1.



ROBERT BURNS

phors, neatly ended poetical periods, a garment of harmonious phrases and noble expressions. They thought to equal Racine by counterfeiting his style. They did not know that in this style the outward elegance conceals an admirable propriety of thought; that if it is a masterpiece of art, it is also a picture of manners; that the most refined and accomplished in society alone could speak and understand it; that it paints a civilisation, as Shakspeare's does; that each of these lines, which appear so stiff, has its inflection and artifice; that all passions, and every shade of passion, are expressed in them,—not, it is true, wild and entire, as in Shakspeare, but pared down and refined by courtly life; that this is a spectacle as unique as the other; that nature perfectly polished is as complex and as difficult to understand as nature perfectly intact; that as for the dramatists we speak of, they were as far below the one as below the other; and that, in short, their characters are as much like Racine's as the porter of Mons. de Beauvilliers or the cook of Madame de Sévigné were like Madame de Sévigné or Mons. de Beauvilliers.¹

VI.

Let us then leave this drama in the obscurity which it deserves, and seek elsewhere, in studied writings, for a happier employment of a fuller talent.

Pamphlets and dissertations in verse, letters, satires,

¹ Burns said, after his arrival in Edinburgh, "Between the man of rustic life and the polite world, I observed little difference. . . . But a refined and accomplished woman was a being altogether new to me, and of which I had formed but a very inadequate idea."—(*Burns' Works*, ed. Cunningham, 1832, 8 vols, i. 207.)

translations and imitations ; here was the true domain of Dryden and of classical reason ; this the field on which logical faculties and the art of writing find their best occupation.¹ Before descending into it, and observing their work, it will be as well to study more closely the man who so wielded them.

His was a singularly solid and judicious mind, an excellent reasoner, accustomed to mature his ideas, armed with good long-meditated proofs, strong in discussion, asserting principles, establishing his subdivisions, citing authorities, drawing inferences ; so that, if we read his prefaces without reading his dramas, we might take him for one of the masters of the dramatic art. He naturally attains a prose style, definite and precise ; his ideas are unfolded with breadth and clearness ; his style is well moulded, exact and simple, free from the affectations and ornaments with which Pope's was burdened afterwards ; his expression is, like that of Corneille, ample and full ; the cause of it is simply to be found in the inner arguments which unfold and sustain it. We can see that he thinks, and that on his own behalf ; that he combines and verifies his thoughts ; that besides all this, he naturally has a just perception, and that with his method he has good sense. He has the tastes and the weaknesses which suit his cast of intellect. He holds in the highest estimation " the admirable Boileau, whose numbers are excellent, whose expressions are noble, whose thoughts are just, whose language is pure, whose satire is pointed, and whose sense is close. What he borrows from the ancients, he repays with usury of his own, in coin as good, and almost as uni-

¹ Dryden says, in his *Essay on Satire*, xlii. 30, " the stage to which my genius never much inclined me."

versally valuable.”¹ He has the stiffness of the logician poets, too strict and argumentative, blaming Ariosto “who neither designed justly, nor observed any unity of action, or compass of time, or moderation in the vastness of his draught; his style is luxurious, without majesty or decency, and his adventures without the compass of nature and possibility.”² He understands delicacy no better than fancy. Speaking of Horace, he finds that “his wit is faint and his salt almost insipid. Juvenal is of a more vigorous and masculine wit; he gives me as much pleasure as I can bear.”³ For the same reason he depreciates the French style: “Their language is not strung with sinews, like our English; it has the nimbleness of a greyhound, but not the bulk and body of a mastiff. . . . They have set up purity for the standard of their language; and a masculine vigour is that of ours.”⁴ Two or three such words depict a man; Dryden has just shown, unwittingly the measure and quality of his mind.

This mind, as we may imagine, is heavy, and especially so in flattery. Flattery is the chief art in a monarchical age. Dryden is hardly skilful in it, any more than his contemporaries. Across the Channel, at the same epoch, they praised just as much, but without cringing too low, because praise was decked out; now disguised or relieved by charm of style; now looking as if men took to it as to a fashion. Thus delicately tempered, people are able to digest it. But here, far from the fine aristocratic kitchen, it weighs like an undigested mass upon the stomach. I have related how Lord Clarendon, hearing that his daughter had just

¹ *Essay on Satire*, dedicated to the Earl of Dorset, xiii. 16.

² *Ibid.* ³ *Ibid.* 84. ⁴ Dedication of the *Annals*, xiv. 204.

married the Duke of York in secret, begged the king to have her instantly beheaded; ¹ how the Commons, composed for the most part of Presbyterians, declared themselves and the English people rebels, worthy of the punishment of death, and moreover cast themselves at the king's feet, with contrite air to beg him to pardon the House and the nation. ² Dryden is no more delicate than statesmen and legislators. His dedications are as a rule nauseous. He says to the Duchess of Monmouth: "To receive the blessings and prayers of mankind, you need only be seen together. We are ready to conclude, that you are a pair of angels sent below to make virtue amiable in your persons, or to sit to poets when they would pleasantly instruct the age, by drawing goodness in the most perfect and alluring shape of nature. . . . No part of Europe can afford a parallel to your noble Lord in masculine beauty, and in goodliness of shape." ³ Elsewhere he says to the Duke of Monmouth: "You have all the advantages of mind and body, and an illustrious birth conspiring to render you an extraordinary person. The Achilles and the Rinaldo are present in you, even above their originals; you only want a Homer or a Tasso to make you equal to them. Youth, beauty, and courage (all which you possess in the height of their perfection) are the most desirable gifts of Heaven." ⁴ His Grace did not frown nor hold his nose, and his Grace was right. ⁵ Another author,

¹ See vol. ii. 332.

² See vol. ii. 334.

³ Dedication of *The Indian Emperor*, ii. 261.

⁴ Dedication of *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 347.

⁵ He also says in the same epistle dedicatory: "All men will join me in the adoration which I pay you." To the Earl of Rochester he writes in a letter (xviii. 90): "I find it is not for me to contend any way with your Lordship, who can write better on the meanest subject

Mrs. Aphra Behn, burned a still more ill-savoured incense under the nose of Nell Gwynne: people's nerves were strong in those days, and they breathed freely where others would be suffocated. The Earl of Dorset having written some little songs and satires, Dryden swears that in his way he equalled Shakspeare, and surpassed all the ancients. And these barefaced panegyrics go on imperturbably for a score of pages, the author alternately passing in review the various virtues of his great man, always finding that the last is the finest;¹ after which he receives by way of recompense a purse of gold. Dryden in taking the money, is not more a flunkey than others. The corporation of Hull, harangued one day by the Duke of Monmouth, made him a present of six broad pieces, which were presented to Monmouth by Marvell, the member for Hull.² Modern scruples were not yet born. I can believe that Dryden, with all his prostrations, lacked spirit more than honour.

A second talent, perhaps the first in carnival time, is the art of saying broad things, and the Restoration was a carnival, about as delicate as a bargee's ball. There are strange songs and rather shameless prologues in Dryden's plays. His *Marriage à la Mode* opens with these verses sung by a married woman:

"Why should a foolish marriage vow,
Which long ago was made,

than I can on the best. . . . You are above any incense I can give you." In his dedication of the *Fables* (xi. 195) he compares the Duke of Ormond to Joseph, Ulysses, Lucullus, etc. In his fourth poetical epistle (xi. 20) he compares Lady Castlemaine to Cato.

¹ Dedication of the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, xv. 226.

² See Andrew Marvell's Works, i. 210.

Oblige us to each other now,
 When passion is decay'd ?
 We loved, and we loved as long as we could,
 'Till our love was loved out in us both.
 But our marriage is dead when the pleasure is fled ;
 'Twas pleasure first made it an oath."¹

The reader may read the rest for himself in Dryden's plays ; it cannot be quoted. Besides, Dryden does not succeed well ; his mind is on too solid a basis ; his mood is too serious, even reserved, taciturn. As Sir Walter Scott justly said, "his indelicacy was like the forced impudence of a bashful man."² He wished to wear the fine exterior of a Sedley or a Rochester, made himself petulant of set purpose, and squatted clumsily in the filth in which others simply sported. Nothing is more sickening than studied lewdness, and Dryden studies everything, even pleasantry and politeness. He wrote to Dennis, who had praised him : "They (the commendations) are no more mine when I receive them than the light of the moon can be allowed to be her own, who shines but by the reflexion of her brother."³ He wrote to his cousin, in a diverting narration, these details of a fat woman, with whom he had travelled : "Her weight made the horses travel very heavily ; but, to give them a breathing time, she would often stop us, . . . and tell us we were all flesh and blood."⁴ It seems that these were the sort of jokes which would then amuse a lady. His letters are made up of heavy official civilities, vigorously hewn compliments, mathematical salutes ; his badinage is a dissertation,

¹ *Marriage à la Mode*, iv. 245. ² Scott's *Life of Dryden*, i. 447.

³ Letter 2, "to Mr. John Dennis," xviii. 114.

⁴ Letter 29, "to Mrs. Steward," xviii. 144.

he props up his trifles with periods. I have found in his works some beautiful passages, but never agreeable ones; he cannot even argue with taste. The characters in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* think themselves still at college, learnedly quote Paterculus, and in Latin too, opposing the definition of the other side, and observing "that it was only *à genre et fine*, and so not altogether perfect."¹ In one of his prefaces he says in a professorial tone: "It is charged upon me that I make debauched persons my protagonists, or the chief persons of the drama; and that I make them happy in the conclusion of my play; against the law of comedy, which is to reward virtue, and punish vice."² Elsewhere he declares: "It is not that I would explode the use of metaphors from passion, for Longinus thinks them necessary to raise it." His great *Essay upon Satire* swarms with useless or long protracted passages, with the inquiries and comparisons of a commentator. He cannot get rid of the scholar, the logician, the rhetorician, and show the plain downright man.

But his true manliness was often apparent; in spite of several falls and many slips, he shows a mind constantly upright, bending rather from conventionality than from nature, possessing enthusiasm and afflatus, occupied with grave thoughts, and subjecting his conduct to his convictions. He was converted loyally and by conviction to the Roman Catholic creed, persevered in it after the fall of James II., lost his post of historiographer and poet-laureate, and though poor, burdened with a family, and infirm, refused to dedicate his *Virgil* to King William. He wrote to his sons:

¹ *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, xv. 302.

² Preface to *An Evening's Love*, iii. 225.

"Dissembling, though lawful in some cases, is not my talent: yet, for your sake, I will struggle with the plain openness of my nature. . . . In the meantime, I flatter not myself with any manner of hopes, but do my duty, and suffer for God's sake. . . . You know the profits (of *Virgil*) might have been more; but neither my conscience nor my honour would suffer me to take them; but I can never repent of my constancy, since I am thoroughly persuaded of the justice of the cause for which I suffer."¹ One of his sons having been expelled from school, he wrote to the master, Dr. Busby, his own former teacher, with extreme gravity and nobleness, asking without humiliation, disagreeing without giving offence, in a sustained and proud style, which is calculated to please, seeking again his favour, if not as a debt to the father, at least as a gift to the son, and concluding, "I have done something, so far to conquer my own spirit as to ask it." He was a good father to his children, as well as liberal, and sometimes even generous, to the tenant of his little estate.² He says: "More libels have been written against me than almost any man now living. . . . I have seldom answered any scurrilous lampoon, . . . and, being naturally vindictive, have suffered in silence, and possessed my soul in quiet."³ Insulted by Collier as a corrupter of morals, he endured this coarse reproof, and nobly confessed the faults of his youth: "I shall say the less of Mr. Collier, because in many things he has taxed me justly; and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine which can be truly argued obscenity, profaneness, or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let

¹ Letter 23, "to his sons at Rome," xviii. 133.

² Scott's *Life of Dryden*, i. 449.

³ *Essay on Satire*, xiii. 80.

him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance."¹ There is some wit in what follows: "He (Collier) is too much given to horseplay in his railery, and comes to battle like a dictator from the plough. I will not say 'the zeal of God's house has eaten him up,' but I am sure it has devoured some part of his good manners and civility."² Such a repentance raises a man; when he humbles himself thus, he must be a great man. He was so in mind and in heart, full of solid arguments and individual opinions, above the petty mannerism of rhetoric and affectations of style, a master of verse, a slave to his idea, with that abundance of thought which is the sign of true genius: "Thoughts such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to chuse or to reject, to run them into verses, or to give them the other harmony of prose: I have so long studied and practised both, that they are grown into a habit, and become familiar to me."³ With these powers he entered upon his second career; the English constitution and genius opened it to him.

VII.

"A man," says La Bruyère, "born a Frenchman and a Christian finds himself constrained in satire; great subjects are forbidden to him; he essays them sometimes, and then turns aside to small things, which he elevates by the beauty of his genius and his style." It was not so in England. Great subjects were given up to vehement discussion; politics and religion, like two

¹ Preface to the *Fables*, xi. 238. ² *Ibid.* ³ *Ibid.* xi. 209.

arenas, invited every talent and every passion to boldness and to battle. The king, at first popular, had roused opposition by his vices and errors, and bent before public discontent as before the intrigue of parties. It was known that he had sold the interests of England to France; it was believed that he would deliver up the consciences of Protestants to the Papists. The lies of Oates, the murder of the magistrate Godfrey, his corpse solemnly paraded in the streets of London, had inflamed the imagination and prejudices of the people; the judges, blind or intimidated, sent innocent Roman Catholics to the scaffold, and the mob received with insults and curses their protestations of innocence. The king's brother had been dismissed from his offices, and it was proposed to exclude him from the throne. The pulpit, the theatre, the press, the hustings, resounded with discussions and recriminations. The names of Whigs and Tories arose, and the loftiest debates of political philosophy were carried on, enlivened by the feeling of present and practical interests, embittered by the rancour of old and wounded passions. Dryden plunged in; and his poem of *Absalom and Achitophel* was a political pamphlet. "They who can criticise so weakly," he says in the preface, "as to imagine that I have done my worst, may be convinced at their own cost that I can write severely with more ease than I can gently." A biblical allegory, suited to the taste of the time, hardly concealed the names, and did not hide the men. He describes the tranquil old age and incontestable right of King David;¹ the charm, pliant humour, popularity of his natural son Absalom;² the

¹ Charles II.

² The Duke of Monmouth.

genius and treachery of Achitophel,¹ who stirs up the son against the father, unites the clashing ambitions, and reanimates the conquered factions. There is hardly any wit here; there is no time to be witty in such contests; think of the roused people who listened, men in prison or exile who are waiting; fortune, liberty, life was at stake. The thing is to strike the nail on the head, hard, not gracefully. The public must recognise the characters, shout their names as they recognise the portraits, applaud the attacks which are made upon them, rail at them, hurl them from the high rank which they covet. Dryden passes them all in review:

¹ The Earl of Shaftesbury :

Of these the false Achitophel was first,
 A name to all succeeding ages curst:
 For close designs and crooked counsels fit,
 Sagacious, bold and turbulent of wit—
 Restless, unfixed in principles and place,
 In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace;
 A fiery soul, which working out its way,
 Fretted the pigmy body to decay
 And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.
 A daring pilot in extremity,
 Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,
 He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,
 Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.
 Great wits are sure to madness near allied
 And thin partitions do their bounds divide;
 Else, why should he, with wealth and honour blest,
 Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?
 Punish a body which he could not please,
 Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?
 And all to leave what with his toil he won,
 To that unfeathered two-legged thing, a son,
 Got, while his soul did huddled notions try,
 And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy,
 In friendship false, implacable in hate,
 Resolved to ruin or to rule the state."

"In the first rank of these did Zimri¹ stand,
 A man so various that he seemed to be
 Not one, but all mankind's epitome :
 Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
 Was everything by starts and nothing long ;
 But in the course of one revolving moon
 Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon ;
 Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
 Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
 Blest madman, who could every hour employ
 With something new to wish or to enjoy !
 Railing and praising were his usual themes ;
 And both, to show his judgment, in extremes :
 So over-violent, or over-civil,
 That every man with him was God or devil.
 In squandering wealth was his peculiar art ;
 Nothing went unrewarded but desert.
 Beggared by fools whom still he found too late,
 He had his jest, and they had his estate.
 He laugh'd himself from Court ; then sought relief
 By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief :
 For spite of him, the weight of business fell
 On Absalom and wise Achitophel ;
 Thus wicked but in will, of means bereft,
 He left not faction, but of that was left. . . .

Shimei,² whose youth did early promise bring
 Of zeal to God and hatred to his King ;
 Did wisely from expensive sins refrain
 And never broke the Sabbath but for gain :
 Nor ever was he known an oath to vent,
 Or curse, unless against the government."

Against these attacks their chief Shaftesbury made a
 stand : when accused of high treason he was declared

¹ The Duke of Buckingham.

² Slingsby Bethel.

not guilty by the grand jury, in spite of all the efforts of the court, amidst the applause of a great crowd; and his partisans caused a medal to be struck, bearing his face, and boldly showing on the reverse London Bridge and the Tower, with the sun rising and shining through a cloud. Dryden replied by his poem of the *Medal*, and the violent diatribe overwhelmed the open provocation :

“ Oh, could the style that copied every grace
And plow'd such furrows for an eunuch face,
Could it have formed his ever-changing will,
The various piece had tired the graver's skill !
A martial hero first, with early care,
Blown like a pigmy by the winds, to war ;
A beardless chief, a rebel ere a man,
So young his hatred to his Prince began.
Next this (how wildly will ambition steer !)
A vermin wriggling in the usurper's ear ;
Bartering his venal wit for sums of gold,
He cast himself into the saint-like mould,
Groaned, sighed, and prayed, while godliness was gain,
The loudest bag-pipe of the squeaking train.”

The same bitterness envenomed religious controversy. Disputes on dogma, for a moment cast into the shade by debauched and sceptical manners, had broken out again, inflamed by the bigoted Roman Catholicism of the prince, and by the just fears of the nation. The poet who in *Religio Laici* was still an Anglican, though lukewarm and hesitating, drawn on gradually by his absolutist inclinations, had become a convert to Romanism, and in his poem of *The Hind and the Panther* fought for his new creed. “ The nation,” he says in the preface, “ is in too high a ferment for me to expect either fair

war or even so much as fair quarter from a reader of the opposite party." And then, making use of mediæval allegories, he represents all the heretical sects as beasts of prey, worrying a white hind of heavenly origin; he spares neither coarse comparisons, gross sarcasms, nor open objurgations. The argument is close and theological throughout. His hearers were not wits, who cared to see how a dry subject could be adorned; they were not theologians, only by accident and for a moment, animated by mistrustful and cautious feelings, like Boileau in his *Amour de Dieu*. They were oppressed men, barely recovered from a secular persecution, attached to their faith by their sufferings, ill at ease under the visible menaces and ominous hatred of their restrained foes. Their poet must be a dialectician and a schoolman; he needs all the sternness of logic; he is immeshed in it, like a recent convert, saturated with the proofs which have separated him from the national faith, and which support him against public reprobation, fertile in distinctions, pointing with his finger at the weaknesses of an argument, subdividing replies, bringing back his adversary to the question, thorny and unpleasing to a modern reader, but the more praised and loved in his own time. In all English minds there is a basis of gravity and vehemence; hate rises tragic, with a gloomy outbreak, like the breakers of the North Sea. In the midst of his public strife Dryden attacks a private enemy, Shadwell, and overwhelms him with immortal scorn.¹ A great epic style and solemn rhyme gave weight to his sarcasm, and the unlucky rhymester was drawn in a ridiculous triumph on the poetic car, whereon the muse

¹ Mac Flecknoe.

sets the heroes and the gods. Dryden represented the Irishman Mac Flecknoe, an old king of folly, deliberating on the choice of a worthy successor, and choosing Shadwell as an heir to his gabble, a propagator of nonsense, a boastful conqueror of common sense. From all sides, through the streets littered with paper, the nations assembled to look upon the young hero, standing near the throne of his father, his brow surrounded with thick fogs, the vacant smile of satisfied imbecility floating over his countenance :

“The hoary prince in majesty appear’d,
High on a throne of his own labours rear’d.
At his right hand our young Ascanius sate,
Rome’s other hope, and pillar of the state ;
His brows thick fogs instead of glories grace,
And lambent dulness play’d around his face.
As Hannibal did to the altars come,
Sworn by his sire, a mortal foe to Rome ;
So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,
That he, till death, true dulness would maintain ;
And, in his father’s right and realm’s defence,
Ne’er to have peace with wit nor truce with sense.
The king himself the sacred unction made,
As king by office and as priest by trade.
In his sinister hand, instead of ball,
He placed a mighty mug of potent ale.”

His father blesses him :

“‘Heavens bless my son ! from Ireland let him reign
To far Barbadoes on the western main ;
Of his dominion may no end be known,
And greater than his father’s be his throne ;
Beyond Love’s Kingdom let him stretch his pen !’
He paused, and all the people cried Amen.

Then thus continued he : ' My son, advance
 Still in new impudence, new ignorance.
 Success let others teach, learn thou from me,
 Pangs without birth and fruitless industry.
 Let Virtuosos in five years be writ ;
 Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of wit . . .
 Let them be all by thy own model made
 Of dulness and desire no foreign aid,
 That they to future ages may be known,
 Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own :
 Nay, let thy men of wit too be the same,
 All full of thee and differing but in name . . .
 Like mine thy gentle numbers feebly creep ;
 Thy tragic Muse gives smiles, thy comic sleep.
 With whate'er gall thou setst thyself to write,
 Thy inoffensive satires never bite ;
 In thy felonious heart though venom lies,
 It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dies.
 Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame
 In keen Iambics, but mild Anagram.
 Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command
 Some peaceful province in Acrostic land.
 There thou may'st wings display, and altars raise,
 And torture one poor word ten thousand ways ;
 Or, if thou wouldst thy different talents suit,
 Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute.'
 He said, but his last words were scarcely heard,
 For Bruce and Longville had a trap prepared,
 And down they set the yet declaiming bard.
 Sinking he left his druggist robe behind,
 Borne upwards by a subterranean wind.
 The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,
 With double portion of his father's art."¹

Thus the insulting masquerade goes on, not studied

¹ Mac Flecknoe.

and polished like Boileau's *Lutrin*, but rude and pompous, inspired by a coarse poetical afflatus, as you may see a great ship enter the muddy Thames, with spread canvas, cleaving the waters.

VIII.

In these three poems, the art of writing, the mark and the source of classical literature, appeared for the first time. A new spirit was born and renewed this art, like everything else; thenceforth, and for a century to come, ideas sprang up and fell into their place after another law than that which had hitherto shaped them. Under Spenser and Shakspeare, living words, like cries or music, betrayed the internal imagination which gave them forth. A kind of vision possessed the artist; landscapes and events were unfolded in his mind as in nature; he concentrated in a glance all the details and all the forces which make up a being, and this image acted and was developed within him like the external object; he imitated his characters; he heard their words; he found it easier to represent them with every pulsation than to relate or explain their feelings; he did not judge, he saw; he was an involuntary actor and mimic; drama was his natural work, because in it the characters speak, and not the author. Then this complex and imitative conception changes colour and is decomposed: man sees things no more at a glance, but in detail; he walks leisurely round them, turning his light upon all their parts in succession. The fire which revealed them by a single illumination is extinguished; he observes qualities, marks aspects, classifies groups of actions, judges and reasons. Words, before animated, and as it were swelling with sap, are withered and dried

up; they become abstractions; they cease to produce in him figures and landscapes; they only set in motion the relics of enfeebled passions; they barely shed a few flickering beams on the uniform texture of his dulled conception; they become exact, almost scientific, like numbers, and like numbers they are arranged in a series, allied by their analogies,—the first, more simple, leading up to the next, more composite,—all in the same order, so that the mind which enters upon a track, finds it level, and is never obliged to quit it. Thenceforth a new career is opened; man has the whole world resubjected to his thought; the change in his thoughts has changed all aspects, and everything assumes a new form in his metamorphosed mind. His task is to explain and to prove; this, in short, is the classical style, and this is the style of Dryden.

He develops, defines, concludes; he declares his thought, then takes it up again, that his reader may receive it prepared, and having received, may retain it. He bounds it with exact terms justified by the dictionary, with simple constructions justified by grammar, that the reader may have at every step a method of verification and a source of clearness. He contrasts ideas with ideas, phrases with phrases, so that the reader, guided by the contrast, may not deviate from the route marked out for him. You may imagine the possible beauty of such a work. This poesy is but a stronger prose. Closer ideas, more marked contrasts, bolder images, only add weight to the argument. Metre and rhyme transform the judgments into sentences. The mind, held on the stretch by the rhythm, studies itself more, and by means of reflection arrives at a noble conclusion. The judgments are enshrined in abbreviative

images, or symmetrical lines, which give them the solidity and popular form of a dogma. General truths acquire the definite form which transmits them to posterity, and propagates them in the human race. Such is the merit of these poems ; they please by their good expressions.¹ In a full and solid web stand out cleverly connected or sparkling threads. Here Dryden has gathered in one line a long argument ; there a happy metaphor has opened up a new perspective under the principal idea ;² further on, two similar words, united together, have struck the mind with an unforeseen and cogent proof ;³ elsewhere a hidden comparison has thrown a tinge of glory or shame on the person who least expected it. These are all artifices or successes of a calculated style, which chains the attention, and leaves the mind persuaded or convinced.

- ¹ " Strong were our sires, and as they fought they writ,
Conquering with force of arms and dint of wit :
Theirs was the giant race before the flood,
And thus, when Charles return'd, our empire stood.
Like Janus, he the stubborn soil manured,
With rules of husbandry the rankness cured ;
Tamed us to manners, when the stage was rude,
And boisterous English wit with art endured. . . .
But what we gain'd in skill we lost in strength,
Our builders were with want of genius curst ;
The second temple was not like the first."

Epistle 12 to Congreve, xi. 59.

- ² " Held up the buckler of the people's cause
Against the crown, and skulk'd against the laws. . . .
Desire of power, on earth a vicious weed,
Yet, sprung from high, is of celestial seed !"

Absalom and Achitophel, Part 1

- ³ " Why then should I, encouraging the bad,
Turn rebel, and run popularly mad ?"

Absalom and Achitophel, Part 1

IX.

In truth, there is scarcely any other literary merit. If Dryden is a skilled politician, a trained controversialist, well armed with arguments, knowing all the ins and outs of discussion, versed in the history of men and parties, this pamphleteering aptitude, practical and English, confines him to the low region of everyday and personal controversies, far from the lofty philosophy and speculative freedom which give endurance and greatness to the classical style of his French contemporaries. In the main, in this age, in England, all discussion was fundamentally narrow. Except the terrible Hobbes, they all lack grand originality. Dryden, like the rest, is confined to the arguments and insults of sect and fashion. Their ideas were as small as their hatred was strong; no general doctrine opened up a poetical vista beyond the tumult of the strife; texts, traditions, a sad train of rigid reasoning, such were their arms; the same prejudices and passions exist in both parties. This is why the subject-matter fell below the art of writing. Dryden had no personal philosophy to develop; he does but versify themes given to him by others. In this sterility art soon is reduced to the clothing of foreign ideas, and the writer becomes an antiquarian or a translator. In reality, the greatest part of Dryden's poems are imitations, adaptations, or copies. He translated Persius and Virgil, with parts of Horace, Theocritus, Juvenal, Lucretius, and Homer, and put into modern English several tales of Boccaccio and Chaucer. These translations then appeared to be as great works as original compositions. When he took the *Aeneid* in hand, the nation, as Johnson tells us, appeared to think

its honour interested in the issue. Addison furnished him with the arguments of every book, and an essay on the *Georgics*; others supplied him with editions and notes; great lords vied with one another in offering him hospitality; subscriptions flowed in. They said that the English Virgil was to give England the Virgil of Rome. This work was long considered his highest glory. Even so at Rome, under Cicero, in the early dearth of national poetry, the translators of Greek works were as highly praised as the original authors.

This sterility of invention alters or depresses the taste. For taste is an instinctive system, and leads us by internal maxims, which we ignore. The mind, guided by it, perceives connections, shuns discordances, enjoys or suffers, chooses or rejects, according to general conceptions which master it, but are not visible. These removed, we see the tact, which they engendered, disappear; the writer is clumsy, because philosophy fails him. Such is the imperfection of the stories handled by Dryden, from Boccaccio and Chaucer. Dryden does not see that fairy tales or tales of chivalry only suit a poetry in its infancy; that ingenuous subjects require an artless style; that the talk of Reynard and Chanticleer, the adventures of Palamon and Arcite, the transformations, tournaments, apparitions, need the astonished carelessness and the graceful gossip of old Chaucer. Vigorous periods, reflective antitheses, here oppress these amiable ghosts; classical phrases embarrass them in their too stringent embrace; they are lost to our sight; to find them again, we must go to their first parent, quit the too harsh light of a learned and manly age; we cannot pursue them fairly except in their first style in the dawn of credulous thought, under the mist which plays about their vague forms, with all the blushes and

smiles of morning. Moreover, when Dryden comes on the scene, he crushes the delicacies of his master, hauling in tirades or reasonings, blotting out sincere and self-abandoning tenderness. What a difference between his account of Arcite's death and Chaucer's! How wretched are all his fine literary words, his gallantry, his symmetrical phrases, his cold regrets, compared to the cries of sorrow, the true outpouring, the deep love in Chaucer! But the worst fault is that almost everywhere he is a copyist, and retains the faults like a literal translator, with eyes glued on the work, powerless to comprehend and recast it, more a rhymester than a poet. When La Fontaine put Æsop or Boccaccio into verse, he breathed a new spirit into them; he took their matter only: the new soul, which constitutes the value of his work, is his, and only his; and this soul befits the work. In place of the Ciceronian periods of Boccaccio, we find slim, little lines, full of delicate raillery, dainty voluptuousness, feigned artlessness, which relish the forbidden fruit because it is fruit, and because it is forbidden. The tragic departs, the relics of the middle-ages are a thousand leagues away; there remains nothing but the invidious gaiety, Gallic and racy, as of a critic and an epicurean. In Dryden, incongruities abound; and our author is so little shocked by them, that he imports them elsewhere, in his theological poems, representing the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, as a hind, and the heresies by various animals, who dispute at as great length and as learnedly as Oxford graduates.¹ I like him no better in his Epistles; as a

¹ "Though Huguenots condemn our ordination,
Succession, ministerial vocation," etc.

(*The Hind and the Panther*, Part ii. x. 166), such are the harsh words we often find in his books.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER



rule, they are but flatteries, almost always awkward, often mythological, interspersed with somewhat commonplace sentences. "I have studied Horace," he says, "and hope the style of his Epistles is not ill imitated here."¹ But don't believe him. Horace's Epistles, though in verse, are genuine letters, brisk, unequal in movement, always unstudied, natural. Nothing is further from Dryden than this original and thorough man of the world, philosophical and lewd,² this most refined and most nervous of epicureans, this kinsman (at eighteen centuries' distance) of Alfred de Musset and Voltaire. Like Horace, an author must be a thinker and a man of the world to write agreeable morality, and Dryden was no more than his contemporaries either a man of the world or a thinker.

But other characteristics, as eminently English, sustain him. Suddenly, in the midst of the yawns which these Epistles occasioned, our eyes are arrested. A true accent, new ideas, are brought out. Dryden, writing to his cousin, a country gentleman, has lighted on an English original subject. He depicts the life of a rural squire, the referee of his neighbours, who shuns lawsuits and town doctors, who keeps himself in health by hunting and exercise. Here is his portrait:

"How bless'd is he, who leads a country life,
Unver'd with anxious cares, and void of strife! . . .
With crowds attended of your ancient race,
You seek the champaign sports, or sylvan chase;
With well-breathed beagles you surround the wood,
Even then industrious of the common good;

¹ Preface to the *Religio Laici*, x. 32.

² What Augustus says about Horace is charming, but cannot be quoted, even in Latin.

And often have you brought the wily fox
To suffer for the firstlings of the flocks ;
O'hased even amid the folds, and made to bleed,
Like felons, where they did the murderous deed.
This fiery game your active youth maintain'd ;
Not yet by years extinguish'd though restrain'd : . . .

A patriot both the king and country serves ;
Prerogative and privilege preserves :
Of each our laws the certain limit show ;
One must not ebb, nor t'other overflow ;
Betwixt the prince and parliament we stand,
The barriers of the state on either hand ;
May neither overflow, for then they drown the land.
When both are full, they feed our bless'd abode ;
Like those that water'd once the paradise of God.
Some overpoise of sway, by turns, they share ;
In peace the people, and the prince in war :
Consuls of moderate power in calms were made ;
When the Gauls came, one sole dictator sway'd.
Patriots, in peace, assert the people's right,
With noble stubbornness resisting might ;
No lawless mandates from the court receive,
Nor lend by force, but in a body give."¹

This serious converse shows a political mind, fed on the spectacle of affairs, having in the matter of public and practical debates the superiority which the French have in speculative discussions and social conversation. So, amidst the dryness of polemics break forth sudden splendours, a poetic fount, a prayer from the heart's depths ; the English well of concentrated passion is on a sudden opened again with a flow and a spirit which Dryden does not elsewhere exhibit :

¹ Epistle 15, xi. 75.

“Dim as the borrow’d beams of moon and stars
 To lonely, weary, wand’ring travellers,
 Is reason to the soul : and as on high
 Those rolling fires discover but the sky,
 Not light us here ; so Reason’s glimm’ring ray
 Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
 But guide us upward to a better day.
 And as those nightly tapers disappear
 When day’s bright lord ascends our hemisphere,
 So pale grows Reason at Religion’s sight,
 So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.”¹

“But, gracious God ! how well dost thou provide
 For erring judgments an unerring guide !
 Thy throne is darkness in th’ abyss of light,
 A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.
 O teach me to believe Thee thus conceal’d,
 And search no farther than Thy self reveal’d ;
 But her alone for my director take,
 Whom Thou hast promised never to forsake !
 My thoughtless youth was wing’d with vain desires ;
 My manhood, long misled by wandering fires,
 Follow’d false lights ; and when their glimpse was gone,
 My pride struck out new sparkles of her own.
 Such was I, such by nature still I am ;
 Be Thine the glory and be mine the shame !
 Good life be now my task ; my doubts are done.”²

is the poetry of these serious minds. After having
 ayed in the debaucheries and pomps of the Restora-
 n, Dryden found his way to the grave emotions of the
 er life ; though a Romanist, he felt like a Protestant
 wretchedness of man and the presence of grace : he
 s capable of enthusiasm. Here and there a manly and

¹ Beginning of *Religio Laici*, x. 37.

² *The Hind and the Panther*, Part. i. l. 64-75, x. 121.

soul-stirring verse discloses, in the midst of his reasonings, the power of conception and the inspiration of desire. When the tragic is met with, he takes to it as to his own domain; at need, he deals in the horrible. He has described the infernal chase, and the torture of the young girl worried by dogs, with the savage energy of Milton."¹ As a contrast, he loved nature: this taste always endures in England, the sombre, reflective passions are unstrung in the grand peace and harmony of the fields. Landscapes are to be met with amidst theological disputation:

"New blossoms flourish and new flowers arise,
As God had been abroad, and walking there
Had left his footsteps and reformed the year.
The sunny hills from far were seen to glow
With glittering beams, and in the meads below
The burnished brooks appeared with liquid gold to flow.
As last they heard the foolish Cuckoo sing,
Whose note proclaimed the holy day of spring."²

Under his regular versification the artist's soul is brought to light;³ though contracted by habits of classical argument, though stiffened by controversy and polemics, though unable to create souls or to depict artless and delicate sentiments, he is a genuine poet: he is troubled, raised by beautiful sounds and forms; he writes boldly under the pressure of vehement ideas; he surrounds

¹ *Theodore and Honoria*, xi. 435.

² *The Hind and the Panther*, Part iii. l. 553-560, x. 214.

³ "For her the weeping heavens become serene,
For her the ground is clad in cheerful green,
For her the nightingales are taught to sing,
And nature for her has delayed the spring."

These charming verses on the Duchess of York remind one of those of La Fontaine in *le Songe*, addressed to the Princess of Conti.

himself willingly with splendid images; he is moved by the buzzing of their swarms, the glitter of their splendours; he is, when he wishes it, a musician and a painter; he writes stirring airs, which shake all the senses, even if they do not sink deep into the heart. Such is his *Alexander's Feast*, an ode in honour of St. Cecilia's day, an admirable trumpet-blast, in which metre and sound impress upon the nerves the emotions of the mind, a master-piece of rapture and of art, which Victor Hugo alone has come up to.¹ Alexander is on his throne in the palace of Persepolis; the lovely Thais sate by his side; before him, in a vast hall, his glorious captains. And Timotheus sings:

“The praise of Bacchus, then, the sweet musician sung;
 Of Bacchus ever fair, and ever young.
 The jolly God in triumph comes;
 Sound the trumpets, beat the drums;
 Flush'd with a purple grace,
 He shews his honest face.
 Now, give the hautboys breath; he comes, he comes.
 Bacchus ever fair and young.
 Drinking joys did first ordain;
 Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
 Drinking is the soldier's pleasure:
 Rich the treasure,
 Sweet the pleasure;
 Sweet is pleasure after pain.”

And at the stirring sounds the king is troubled; his cheeks are glowing; his battles return to his memory; he defies heaven and earth. Then a sad song depresses him. Timotheus mourns the death of the betrayed

¹ For instance, in the *Chant du Cirque*.

Darius. Then a tender song softens him ; Timotheus lauds the dazzling beauty of Thais. Suddenly he strikes the lyre again :

“ A louder yet, and yet a louder strain.
Break his bands of sleep asunder,
And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.
Hark, hark ! the horrid sound
Has raised up his head ;
As awaked from the dead,
And amazed, he stares around.
Revenge, revenge ! Timotheus cries,
See the furies arise ;
See the snakes, that they rear,
How they hiss in their hair !
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes !
Behold a ghastly band,
Each a torch in his hand !
Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain,
And unburied remain
Inglorious on the plain :
Give the vengeance due
To the valiant crew.
Behold how they toss their torches on high,
How they point to the Persian abodes,
And glittering temples of their hostile gods.—
The princes applaud, with a furious joy.
And the king seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy ;
Thais led the way,
To light him to his prey,
And, like another Helen, fired another Troy.”¹

Thus formerly music softened, exalted, mastered men ;
Dryden's verses acquire again its power in describing it.

¹ *Alexander's Feast*, xi. 183-188.

X

This was one of his last works;¹ brilliant and poetical, it was born amidst the greatest sadness. The king for whom he had written was deposed and in exile; the religion which he had embraced was despised and oppressed; a Roman Catholic and a royalist, he was bound to a conquered party, which the nation resentfully and distrustfully considered as the natural enemy of liberty and reason. He had lost the two places which were his support; he lived wretchedly, burdened with a family, obliged to support his sons abroad; treated as a hireling by a coarse publisher forced to ask him for money to pay for a watch which he could not get on credit, beseeching Lord Bolingbroke to protect him against Tonson's insults, rated by this shopkeeper when the promised page was not finished on the stated day. His enemies persecuted him with pamphlets; the severe Collier lashed his comedies unfeelingly; he was damned without pity, but conscientiously. He had long been in ill health, crippled, constrained to write much, reduced to exaggerate flattery in order to earn from the great the indispensable money which the publishers would not give him:² "What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age, in plenty and at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write; and my judges, if they are not very equitable, already prejudiced against me, by the lying

¹ *Alexander's Feast* was written in 1697, soon after the publication of the Virgil. In 1699 appeared Dryden's translated tales and original poems, generally known as "The Fables," in which the portrait of the English country-gentleman (see page 65) is to be found.—TA.

² He was paid two hundred and fifty guineas for ten thousand lines

character which has been given them of my morals."¹ Although he looked at his conduct from the most favourable point of view, he knew that it had not always been worthy, and that all his writings would not endure. Born between two epochs, he had oscillated between two forms of life and two forms of thought, having reached the perfection of neither, having kept the faults of both; having discovered in surrounding manners no support worthy of his character, and in surrounding ideas no subject worthy of his talent. If he had founded criticism and good style, this criticism had only its scope in pedantic treatises or unconnected prefaces; this good style continued out of the track in inflated tragedies, dispersed over multiplied translations, scattered in occasional pieces, in odes written to order, in party poems, meeting only here and there an afflatus capable of employing it, and a subject capable of sustaining it. What gigantic efforts to end in such a moderate result! This is the natural condition of man. The end of everything is pain and agony. For a long time gravel and gout left him no peace; erysipelas seized one of his legs. In April 1700 he tried to go out; "a slight inflammation in one of his toes became from neglect, a gangrene;" the doctor would have tried amputation, but Dryden decided that what remained to him of health and happiness was not worth the pain. He died at the age of sixty-nine.

¹ Postscript of *Virgil's Works*, as translated by Dryden, xv. p. 187.

CHAPTER III.

The Revolution.

I.

WITH the constitution of 1688 a new spirit appears in England. Slowly, gradually, the moral revolution accompanies the social: man changes with the state, in the same sense and for the same causes; character moulds itself to the situation; and little by little, in manners and in literature, we see spring up a serious, reflective, moral spirit, capable of discipline and independence, which can alone maintain and give effect to a constitution.

II.

This was not achieved without difficulty, and at first sight it seems as though England had gained nothing by this revolution of which she is so proud. The aspect of things under William, Anne, and the first two Georges, is repulsive. We are tempted to agree with Swift in his judgment, to say that if he has depicted a Yahoo, it is because he has seen him; naked or drawn in his carriage, the Yahoo is not beautiful. We see but corruption in high places, brutality in low, a band of intriguers leading a mob of brutes. The human beast, inflamed by political passions, gives vent to cries and violence, burns Admiral Byng in effigy, demands his death, would destroy his house and park, sways

in turns from party to party, seems with its blind force ready to annihilate civil society. When Dr. Sacheverell was tried, the butcher boys, crossing-sweepers, chimney-sweepers, costermongers, drabs, the entire scum, conceiving the Church to be in danger, follow him with yells of rage and enthusiasm, and in the evening set to work to burn and pillage the dissenter's chapels. When Lord Bute, in defiance of public opinion, was set up in Pitt's place, he was assailed with stones, and was obliged to surround his carriage with a strong guard. At every political crisis was heard a riotous growl, were seen disorder, blows, broken heads. It was worse when the people's own interests were at stake. Gin had been discovered in 1684, and about half a century later England consumed seven millions of gallons.¹ The tavernkeepers on their signboards invited people to come and get drunk for a penny; for twopence they might get dead drunk; no charge for straw; the landlord dragged those who succumbed into a cellar, where they slept off their carouse. A man could not walk London streets without meeting wretches, incapable of motion or thought, lying in the kennel, whom the care of the passers-by alone could prevent from being smothered in mud, or run over by carriage wheels. A tax was imposed to stop this madness: it was in vain; the judges dared not condemn, the informers were assassinated. The House gave way, and Walpole, finding himself threatened with a riot, withdrew his law.² All these bewigged and ermined lawyers, these bishops

¹ 1742, Report of Lord Lonsdale.

² In the present inflamed temper of the people, the Act could not be carried into execution without an armed force.—*Speech of Sir Robert Walpole.*

in lace, these embroidered and gold-bedizened lords, this fine government so cleverly balanced, was carried on the back of a huge and formidable brute, which as a rule would tramp peacefully though growlingly on, but which on a sudden, for a mere whim, could shake and crush it. This was clearly seen in 1780, during the riots of Lord George Gordon. Without reason or guidance at the cry of No Popery the excited mob demolished the prisons, let loose the criminals, abused the Peers, and was for three days master of London, burning, pillaging, and glutting itself. Barrels of gin were staved in and made rivers in the streets. Children and women on their knees drank themselves to death. Some became mad, others fell down besotted, and the burning and falling houses killed them, and buried them under their ruins. Eleven years later, at Birmingham, the people sacked and gutted the houses of the Liberals and Dissenters, and were found next day in heaps, dead drunk, in the roads and ditches. When instinct rebels in this over-strong and well-fed race it becomes perilous. John Bull dashed headlong at the first red rag which he thought he saw.

The higher ranks were even less estimable than the lower. If there has been no more beneficial revolution than that of 1688, there has been none that was launched or supported by dirtier means. Treachery was everywhere, not simple, but double and triple. Under William and Anne, admirals, ministers, members of the Privy Council, favourites of the antechamber, corresponded and conspired with the same Stuarts whom they had sold, only to sell them again, with a complication of bargains, each destroying the last, and a complication of perjuries, each surpassing the last, until in the end

no one knew who had bought him, or to what party he belonged. The greatest general of the age, the Duke of Marlborough, is one of the basest rogues in history, supported by his mistresses, a niggard user of the pay which he received from them, systematically plundering his soldiers, trafficking on political secrets, a traitor to James II., to William, to England, betraying to James the intended plan of attacking Brest, and even, when old and infirm, walking from the public rooms in Bath to his lodgings, on a cold and dark night, to save sixpence in chair-hire. Next to him we may place Bolingbroke, a sceptic and cynic, minister in turn to Queen and Pretender, disloyal alike to both, a trafficker in consciences, marriages, and promises, who had squandered his talents in debauch and intrigue, to end in disgrace, impotence, and scorn.¹ Walpole, who used to boast that "every man had his price,"² was compelled to resign, after having been prime minister for twenty years. Montesquieu wrote in 1729:³ "There are Scotch members who have only two hundred pounds for their vote, and sell it at this price. Englishmen are no longer worthy of their liberty. They sell it to the king; and if the king should sell it back to them, they would sell it him again." We read in Bubb Doddington's *Diary* the candid fashion and pretty contrivances of this great traffic. So Dr. King states: "He (Walpole) wanted to carry a question in the House of Commons, to which he knew there would be great opposition. . . . As he was passing through the Court of

¹ See Walpole's terrible speech against him, 1734.

² See, for the truth of this statement, *Memoirs of Horace Walpole*, 2 vols., ed. E. Warburton, 1851, i. 381, note.—Tr.

³ Notes during a journey in England made in 1729 with Lord Chesterfield.

Requests, he met a member of the contrary party, whose avarice, he imagined, would not reject a large bribe. He took him aside, and said, 'Such a question comes on this day; give me your vote, and here is a bank-bill of two thousand pounds,' which he put into his hands. The member made him this answer: 'Sir Robert, you have lately served some of my particular friends; and when my wife was last at court, the King was very gracious to her, which must have happened at your instance. I should therefore think myself very ungrateful (putting the bank-bill into his pocket) if I were to refuse the favour you are now pleased to ask me.'"¹ This is how a man of the world did business. Corruption was so firmly established in public manners and in politics, that after the fall of Walpole, Lord Bute, who had denounced him, was obliged to practise and increase it. His colleague Henry Fox, the first Lord Holland, changed the pay-office into a market, haggled about their price with hundreds of members, distributed in one morning twenty-five thousand pounds. Votes were only to be had for cash down, and yet at an important crisis these mercenaries threatened to go over to the enemy, struck for wages, and demanded more. Nor did the leaders miss their own share. They sold themselves for, or paid themselves with, titles, dignities, sinecures. In order to get a place vacant, they gave the holder a pension of two, three, five, and even seven thousand a year. Pitt, the most upright of politicians, the leader of those who were called patriots, gave and broke his word, attacked or defended Walpole, proposed war or peace, all to become

¹ Dr. W. King, *Political and Literary Anecdotes of his own Times*, 1818, 27.

or to continue a minister. Fox, his rival, was a sort of shameless sink. The Duke of Newcastle, "whose name was perfidy," "a living, moving, talking caricature," the most clumsy, ignorant, ridiculed and despised of the aristocracy, was in the Cabinet for thirty years and premier for ten years, by virtue of his connections, his wealth, of the elections which he managed, and the places in his gift. The fall of the Stuarts put the government into the hands of a few great families which, by means of rotten boroughs, bought members and high-sounding speeches, oppressed the king, moulded the passions of the mob, intrigued, lied, wrangled, and tried to swindle each other out of power.

Private manners were as lovely as public. As a rule, the reigning king detested his son; this son got into debt, asked Parliament for an increased allowance, allied himself with his father's enemies. George I. kept his wife in prison thirty-two years, and got drunk every night with his two ugly mistresses. George II., who loved his wife, took mistresses to keep up appearances, rejoiced at his son's death, upset his father's will. His eldest son cheated at cards,¹ and one day at Kensington, having borrowed five thousand pounds from Bubb Doddington, said, when he saw him from the window: "That man is reckoned one of the most sensible men in England, yet with all his parts I have just nicked him out of five thousand pounds."² George IV. was a sort of coachman, gamester, scandalous roysterer, unprincipled betting-man, whose proceedings all but got him excluded from the Jockey Club. The

¹ Frederick died 1751. *Memoirs of Horace Walpole*, i. 262.

² Walpole's *Memoirs of George II.*, ed. Lord Holland, 3 vols. 2d ed., 1847 i. 77.

only upright man was George III., a poor half-witted dullard, who went mad, and whom his mother had kept locked up in his youth as though in a cloister. She gave as her reason the universal corruption of men of quality. "The young men," she said, "were all rakes; the young women made love, instead of waiting till it was made to them." In fact, vice was in fashion, not delicate vice as in France; "Money," wrote Montesquieu, "is here esteemed above everything, honour and virtue not much. An Englishman must have a good dinner, a woman, and money. As he does not go much into society, and limits himself to this, so, as soon as his fortune is gone, and he can no longer have these things, he commits suicide or turns robber." The young men had a superabundance of coarse energy, which made them mistake brutality for pleasure. The most celebrated called themselves Mohocks, and tyrannised over London by night. They stopped people, and made them dance by pricking their legs with their swords; sometimes they would put a woman in a tub, and set her rolling down a hill; others would place her on her head, with her feet in the air; some would flatten the nose of the wretch whom they had caught, and press his eyes out of their sockets. Swift, the comic writers, the novelists, have painted the baseness of this gross debauchery, craving for riot, living in drunkenness, revelling in obscenity, issuing in cruelty, ending by irreligion and atheism.¹ This violent and excessive mood requires to occupy itself proudly and daringly in the destruction of what men respect, and what institutions protect. These men attack the clergy by the same instinct which leads them to beat the

¹ See the character of Birton in Voltaire's *Jenny*.

watch. Collins, Tindal, Bolingbroke, are their teachers; the corruption of manners, the frequent practice of treason, the warring amongst sects, the freedom of speech, the progress of science, and the fermentation of ideas, seemed as if they would dissolve Christianity. "There is no religion in England," said Montesquieu. "Four or five in the house of Commons go to prayers or to the parliamentary sermon. . . . If any one speaks of religion, everybody begins to laugh. A man happening to say, 'I believe this like an article of faith,' everybody burst out laughing." In fact, the phrase was provincial, and smacked of antiquity. The main thing was to be fashionable, and it is amusing to see from Lord Chesterfield in what this fashion consisted. Of justice and honour he only speaks transiently, and for form's sake. Before all, he says to his son, "have manners, good breeding, and the graces." He insists upon it in every letter, with a fulness and force of illustration which form an odd contrast: "Mon cher ami, comment vont les grâces, les manières, les agrémens, et tous ces petits riens si nécessaires pour rendre un homme aimable? Les prenez-vous? y faites-vous des progrès? . . . A propos, on m'assure que Madame de Blot sans avoir des traits, est jolie comme un cœur, et que nonobstant cela, elle s'en est tenue jusqu'ici scrupuleusement à son mari, quoi qu'il y ait déjà plus d'un an qu'elle est mariée. Elle n'y pense pas."¹ . . . "It seems ridiculous to tell you, but it is most certainly true, that your dancing-master is at this time the man in all Europe of the greatest importance to you."² . . .

¹ The original letter is in French. Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, ed. Mahon, 4 vols. 1845; ii. April 15, 1751, p. 127.

² *Ibid.* ii. Jan. 8, 1751, p. 72.

"In your person you must be accurately clean; and your teeth, hands, and nails should be superlatively so. . . . Upon no account whatever put your fingers in your nose or ears.¹ What says Madame Dupin to you? For an attachment I should prefer her to la petite Blot.² . . . Pleasing women may in time be of service to you, They often please and govern others."³

And he quotes to him as examples, Bolingbroke and Marlborough, the two worst roués of the age. Thus speaks a serious man, once Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, an ambassador and plenipotentiary, and finally a Secretary of State, an authority in matters of education and taste.⁴ He wishes to polish his son, to give him a French air, to add to solid diplomatic knowledge and large views of ambition an engaging, lively, and frivolous manner. This outward polish, which at Paris is of the true colour, is here but a shocking veneer. This transplanted politeness is a lie, this vivacity is want of sense, this worldly education seems fitted only to make actors and rogues.

So thought Gay in his *Beggars' Opera*, and the

¹ Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, ed. Mahon, 4 vols., 1845; ii. Nov. 12, 1750, p. 57.

² *Ibid.* ii. May 16, 1751, p. 146.

³ *Ibid.* ii. Jan. 21, 1751, p. 81.

⁴ "They (the English) are commonly twenty years old before they have spoken to anybody above their schoolmaster and the fellows of their college. If they happen to have learning, it is only Greek and Latin, but not one word of modern history or modern languages. Thus prepared, they go abroad, as they call it; but, in truth, they stay at home all that while: for, being very awkward, confoundedly ashamed, and not speaking the languages, they go into no foreign company, at least none good; but dine and sup with one another only at the tavern." *Ibid.* i., May 10, O. S., 1748, p. 136. "I could wish you would ask him (Mr. Burriah) for some letters to young fellows of pleasure or fashionable coquettes, that you may be *dans l'honnête débouche de Munich*."—*Ibid.* ii. Oct. 3, 1753, p. 331.

polished society applauded with *furor* the portrait which he drew of it. Sixty-three consecutive nights the piece ran amidst a tempest of laughter; the ladies had the songs written on their fans, and the principal actress married a duke. What a satire! Thieves infested London, so that in 1728 the queen herself was almost robbed; they formed bands, with officers, a treasury, a commander-in-chief, and multiplied, though every six weeks they were sent by the cartload to the gallows. Such was the society which Gay put on the stage. In his opinion, it was as good as the higher society; it was hard to discriminate between them; the manners, wit, conduct, morality in both were alike. "Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen."¹

Wherein, for example, is Peachum different from a great minister? Like him, he is a leader of a gang of thieves; like him, he has a register for thefts; like him, he receives money with both hands; like him, he contrives to have his friends caught and hung when they trouble him; he uses, like him, parliamentary language and classical comparisons; he has, like him, gravity, steadiness, and is eloquently indignant when his honour is suspected. It is true that Peachum quarrels with a comrade about the plunder, and takes him by the throat? But lately, Sir Robert Walpole and Lord Townsend had fought with each other on a similar question. Listen to what Mrs. Peachum says of her daughter: "Love him! (Macheath), worse and worse!

¹ Speech of the Beggar in the Epilogue of the *Beggars' Opera*.

I thought the girl had been better bred.”¹ The daughter observes: “A woman knows how to be mercenary though she has never been in a court or at an assembly.”² And the father remarks: “My daughter to me should be, like a court lady to a minister of state, a key to the whole gang.”³ As to Macheath, he is a fit son-in-law for such a politician. If less brilliant in council than in action, that only suits his age. Point out a young and noble officer who has a better address, or performs finer actions. He is a highwayman, that is his bravery; he shares his booty with his friends, that is his generosity: “You see, gentlemen, I am not a mere court-friend, who professes everything and will do nothing. . . . But we, gentlemen, have still honour enough to break through the corruptions of the world.”⁴ For the rest he is gallant; he has half-a-dozen wives, a dozen children; he frequents stews, he is amiable towards the beauties whom he meets, he is easy in manners, he makes elegant bows to every one, he pays compliments to all: “Mistress Slammekin! as careless and genteel as ever! all you fine ladies, who know your own beauty affect undress . . . If any of the ladies chuse gin, I hope they will be so free as to call for it.—Indeed, sir, I never drink strong waters, but when I have the colic.—Just the excuse of the fine ladies! why, a lady of quality is never without the colic.”⁵ Is this not the genuine tone of good society? And does anyone doubt that Macheath is a man of quality when we learn that he has deserved to be hung, and is not? Everything yields to such a proof. If, however, we wish for another, he would add that, “As to conscience

¹ *Gay's Plays*, 1772; *The Beggars' Opera*, i. 1.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* iii. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.* ii. 1.

and musty morals, I have as few drawbacks upon my pleasures as any man of quality in England; in those I am not at least vulgar."¹ After such a speech a man must give in. Do not bring up the foulness of these manners; we see that there is nothing repulsive in them, because fashionable society likes them. These interiors of prisons and stews, these gambling-houses, this whiff of gin, this pander-traffic, and these pick-pockets' calculations, by no means disgust the ladies, who applaud from the boxes. They sing the songs of Polly; their nerves shrink from no detail; they have already inhaled the filthy odours from the highly polished pastorals of the amiable poet.² They laugh to see Lucy show her pregnancy to Macheath, and give Polly "rat-bane." They are familiar with all the refinements of the gallows, and all the niceties of medicine. Mistress Trapes expounds her trade before them, and complains of having "eleven fine customers now down under the surgeon's hands." Mr. Filch, a prison-prop, uses words which cannot even be quoted. A cruel keenness, sharpened by a stinging irony, flows through the work, like one of those London streams whose corrosive smells Swift and Gay have described; more than a hundred years later it still proclaims the dishonour of the society which is bespattered and befouled with its mire.

¹ I cannot find these lines in the edition I have consulted.—Tr.

² In these Eclogues the ladies explain in good style that their friends have their lackeys for lovers: "Her favours Sylvia shares amongst mankind; such gen'rous Love could never be confin'd." Elsewhere the servant girl says to her mistress: "Have you not fancy'd, in his frequent kiss, th' ungrateful leavings of a filthy miss?"

III.

These were but the externals; and close observers, like Voltaire, did not misinterpret them. Betwixt the slime at the bottom and the scum on the surface rolled the great national river, which, purified by its own motion, already at intervals gave signs of its true colour, soon to display the powerful regularity of its course and the wholesome limpidity of its waters. It advanced in its native bed; every nation has one of its own, which flows down its proper slope. It is this slope which gives to each civilisation its degree and form, and it is this which we must endeavour to describe and measure.

To this end we have only to follow the travellers from the two countries who at this time crossed the Channel. Never did England regard and imitate France more, nor France England. To see the distinct current in which each nation flowed, we have but to open our eyes. Lord Chesterfield writes to his son:

"It must be owned, that the polite conversation of the men and women at Paris, though not always very deep, is much less futile and frivolous than ours here. It turns at least upon some subject, something of taste, some point of history, criticism, and even philosophy, which, though probably not quite so solid as Mr. Locke's, is however better, and more becoming rational beings, than our frivolous dissertations upon the weather or upon whist."¹

In fact, the French became civilised by conversation; not so the English. As soon as the Frenchman quits mechanical labour and coarse material life, even before he quits it, he converses: this is his goal and his

¹ Chesterfield's *Letters*, ii. April 22, O. S., 1751, p. 181. See, for a contrast, Swift's *Essay on Polite Conversation*.

pleasure.¹ Barely has he escaped from religious wars and feudal isolation, when he makes his bow and has his say. With the Hotel de Rambouillet we get the fine drawing-room talk, which is to last two centuries: Germans, English, all Europe, either novices or dullards, listen to France open-mouthed, and from time to time clumsily attempt an imitation. How amiable are French talkers! What discrimination! What innate tact! With what grace and dexterity they can persuade, interest, amuse, stroke down sickly vanity, rivet the diverted attention, insinuate dangerous truth, ever soaring a hundred feet above the tedium-point where their rivals are floundering with all their native heaviness. But, above all, how sharp they soon have become! Instinctively and without effort they light upon easy gesture, fluent speech, sustained elegance, a characteristic piquancy, a perfect clearness. Their phrases, still formal under Guez de Balzac, are looser, lighter, launch out, move speedily, and under Voltaire find their wings. Did any man ever see such a desire, such an art of pleasing? Pedantic sciences, political economy, theology, the sullen denizens of the Academy and the Sorbonne, speak but in epigrams. Montesquieu's *l'Esprit des Loix* is also "*l'Esprit sur les lois*." Rousseau's periods, which begat a revolution, were balanced, turned, polished for eighteen hours in his head. Voltaire's philosophy breaks out into a million sparks. Every idea must blossom into a witticism; people only have

¹ Even in 1826, Sydney Smith, arriving at Calais, writes (*Life and Letters*, ii. 253, 254): "What pleases me is the taste and ingenuity displayed in the shops, and the good manners and politeness of the people. Such is the state of manners, that you appear almost to have quitted a land of barbarians. I have not seen a cobbler who is not better bred than an English gentleman."

flashes of thought ; all truth, the most intricate and the most sacred, becomes a pleasant drawing-room conceit, thrown backward and forward, like a gilded shuttlecock, by delicate women's hands, without sullyng the lace sleeves from which their slim arms emerge, or the garlands which the rosy Cupids unfold on the wainscoting. Everything must glitter, sparkle, or smile. The passions are deadened, love is rendered insipid, the proprieties are multiplied, good manners are exaggerated. The refined man becomes "sensitive." From his wadded taffeta dressing-gown he keeps plucking his worked handkerchief to whisk away the moist omen of a tear ; he lays his hand on his heart, he grows tender ; he has become so delicate and correct, that an Englishman knows not whether to take him for an hysterical young woman or a dancing-master.¹ Take a near view of this beribboned puppy, in his light-green dress, lisping out the songs of Florian. The genius of society which has led him to these fooleries has also led him elsewhere ; for conversation, in France at least, is a chase after ideas. To this day, in spite of modern distrust and sadness, it is at table, after dinner, over the coffee especially, that deep politics and the loftiest philosophy crop up. To think, above all to think rapidly, is a recreation. The mind finds in it a sort of

¹ See in *Evelina*, by Miss Burney, 3 vols., 1784, the character of the poor, genteel Frenchman, M. Dubois, who is made to tremble even whilst lying in the gutter. These very correct young ladies go to see Congreve's *Love for Love* ; their parents are not afraid of showing them Miss Prue. See also, in *Evelina*, by way of contrast, the boorish character of the English captain ; he throws Mrs. Duval twice in the mud ; he says to his daughter Molly : "I charge you, as you value my favour, that you'll never again be so impertinent as to have a taste of your own before my face" (i. 190). The change, even from sixty years ago, is surprising.

ball; think how eagerly it hastens thither. This is the source of all French culture. At the dawn of the century, the ladies, between a couple of bows, produced studied portraits and subtle dissertations; they understand Descartes, appreciate Nicole, approve Bossuet. Presently little suppers are introduced, and during the dessert they discuss the existence of God. Are not theology, morality, set forth in a noble or piquant style, pleasures for the drawing-room and adornments of luxury? Fancy finds place amongst them, floats about and sparkles like a light flame over all the subjects on which it feeds. How lofty a flight did intelligence take during this eighteenth century! Was society ever more anxious for sublime truths, more bold in their search, more quick to discover, more ardent in embracing them? These perfumed *marquises*, these laced coxcombs, all these pretty, well-dressed, gallant, frivolous people, crowd to hear philosophy discussed, as they go to hear an opera. The origin of animated beings, the eels of Needham,¹ the adventures of Jacques the Fatalist,² and the question of free-will, the principles of political economy, and the calculations of the Man with Forty Crowns,³—all is to them a matter for paradoxes and discoveries. All the heavy rocks, which the men who had made it their business, were hewing and undermining laboriously in solitude, being carried along and polished in the public torrent, roll in myriads, mingled together with a joyous clatter, hurried onwards with an ever-increasing rapidity.

¹ Needham (1713-1781), a learned English naturalist, made and published microscopical discoveries and remarks on the generation of organic bodies.—Th.

² The title of a philosophical novel by Diderot.—Th.

³ The title of a philosophical tale by Voltaire.—Th.

There was no bar, no collision; they were not checked by the practicability of their plans: they thought for thinking's sake; theories could be expanded at ease. In fact, this is how in France men have always conversed. They play with general truths; they glean one nimbly from the heap of facts in which it lay concealed, and develop it; they hover above observation in reason and rhetoric; they find themselves uncomfortable and commonplace when they are not in the region of pure ideas. And in this respect the eighteenth century continues the seventeenth. The philosophers had described good breeding, flattery, misanthropy, avarice; they now instituted inquiries into liberty, tyranny, religion; they had studied man in himself; they now study him in the abstract. Religious and monarchical writers are of the same school as impious and revolutionary writers; Boileau leads up to Rousseau, Racine to Robespierre. Oratorical reasoning formed the regular theatre and classical preaching; it also produced the Declaration of Rights and the *Contrat Social*. They form for themselves a certain idea of man, of his inclinations, faculties, duties; a mutilated idea, but the more clear as it was the more reduced. From being aristocratic it becomes popular; instead of being an amusement, it is a faith; from delicate and sceptical hands it passes to coarse and enthusiastic hands. From the lustre of the drawing-room they make a brand and a torch. Such is the current on which the French mind floated for two centuries, caressed by the refinements of an exquisite politeness, amused by a swarm of brilliant ideas, charmed by the promises of golden theories, until, thinking that it touched the cloud-palace, made bright by the future.

it suddenly lost its footing and fell in the storm of the Revolution.

Altogether different is the path which English civilisation has taken. It is not the spirit of society which has made it, but moral sense; and the reason is, that in England man is not as he is in France. The Frenchmen who became acquainted with England at this period were struck by it. "In France," says Montesquieu, "I become friendly with everybody; in England with nobody. You must do here as the English do, live for yourself, care for no one, love no one, rely on no one." Englishmen were of a singular genius, yet "solitary and sad. They are reserved, live much in themselves, and think alone. Most of them having wit, are tormented by their very wit. Scorning or disgusted with all things, they are unhappy amid so many reasons why they should not be so." And Voltaire, like Montesquieu, continually alludes to the sombre energy of the English character. He says that in London there are days when the wind is in the east, when it is customary for people to hang themselves; he relates shudderingly how a young girl cut her throat, and how her lover without a word redeemed the knife. He is surprised to see "so many Timons, so many splenetic misanthropes." Whither will they go? There was one path which grew daily wider. The Englishman, naturally serious, meditative, and sad, did not regard life as a game or a pleasure; his eyes were habitually turned, not outward to smiling nature, but inward to the life of the soul; he examines himself, ever descends within himself, confines himself to the moral world, and at last sees no other beauty but that which shines there; he enthrones justice as the sole and absolute queen of humanity, and

conceives the plan of disposing all his actions according to a rigid code. He has no lack of force in this; for his pride comes to assist his conscience. Having chosen himself and by himself the route, he would blush to quit it; he rejects temptations as his enemies; he feels that he is fighting and conquering,¹ that he is doing a difficult thing, that he is worthy of admiration, that he is a man. Moreover, he rescues himself from his capital foe, tedium, and satisfies his craving for action; understanding his duties, he employs his faculties and he has a purpose in life, and this gives rise to associations, endowments, preachings; and finding more steadfast souls, and nerves more tightly strung, it sends them forth, without causing them too much suffering, too long strife, through ridicule and danger. The reflective character of the man has given a moral rule; the militant character now gives moral force. The mind, thus directed, is more apt than any other to comprehend duty; the will, thus armed, is more capable than any other of performing its duty. This is the fundamental faculty which is found in all parts of public life, concealed but present, like one of those deep primeval rocks, which, lying far inland, give to all undulations of the soil a basis and a support.

IV.

This faculty gives first a basis and a support to Protestantism, and it is from this structure of mind that the Englishman is religious. Let us find our way through

¹ "The consciousness of silent endurance, so dear to every Englishman, of standing out against something and not giving in."—*Tom Brown's School Days*.

the knotty and uninviting bark. Voltaire laughs at it, and jests about the ranting of the preachers and the austerity of the faithful. "There is no opera, no comedy, no concert on a Sunday in London; cards even are expressly forbidden, so that only persons of quality, and those who are called respectable people, play on that day." He amuses himself at the expense of the Anglicans, "so scrupulous in collecting their tithes;" the Presbyterians, "who look as if they were angry, and preach with a strong nasal accent;" the Quakers, "who go to church and wait for inspiration with their hats on their heads." But is there nothing to be observed but these externals? And do we suppose that we are acquainted with a religion because we know the details of formulary and vestment? There is a common faith beneath all these sectarian differences: whatever be the form of Protestantism, its object and result are the culture of the moral sense; that is why it is popular in England: principles and dogmas all make it suitable to the instincts of the nation. The sentiment which in the Protestant is the source of everything, is qualms of conscience; he pictures perfect justice, and feels that his uprightness, however great, cannot stand before that. He thinks of the Day of Judgment, and tells himself that he will be damned. He is troubled, and prostrates himself; he prays God to pardon his sins and renew his heart. He sees that neither by his desires, nor his deeds, nor by any ceremony or institution, nor by himself, nor by any creature, can he deserve the one or obtain the other. He betakes himself to Christ, the one Mediator; he prays to him, he feels his presence, he finds himself justified by his grace, elect, healed, transformed, predestinated. Thus

understood, religion is a moral revolution ; thus simplified, religion is only a moral revolution. Before this deep emotion, metaphysics and theology, ceremonies and discipline, all is blotted out or subordinate, and Christianity is simply the purification of the heart. Look now at these men, dressed in sombre colours, speaking through the nose on Sundays, in a box of dark wood, whilst a man in bands, "with the air of a Cato," reads a psalm. Is there nothing in their heart but theological "trash" or mechanical phrases? There is a deep sentiment—veneration. This bare Dissenters' meeting-house, this simple service and church of the Anglicans, leave them open to the impression of what they read and hear. For they do hear, and they do read ; prayer in the vulgar tongue, psalms translated into the vulgar tongue, can penetrate through their senses to their souls. They do penetrate ; and this is why they have such a collected mien. For the race is by its very nature capable of deep emotions, disposed by the vehemence of its imagination to comprehend the grand and tragic ; and the Bible, which is to them the very word of eternal God, provides it. I know that to Voltaire it is only emphatic, unconnected, ridiculous ; the sentiments with which it is filled are out of harmony with French sentiments. In England the hearers are on the level of its energy and harshness. The cries of anguish or admiration of the solitary Hebrew, the transports, the sudden outbursts of sublime passion, the desire for justice, the growling of the thunder and the judgments of God, shake, across thirty centuries, these biblical souls. Their other books assist it. The Prayer Book, which is handed down as an heirloom with the old family Bible, speaks to all, to the dullest peasant,

or the miner, the solemn accent of true prayer. The new-born poetry, the reviving religion of the sixteenth century, have impressed their magnificent gravity upon it; and we feel in it, as in Milton himself, the pulse of the twofold inspiration which then lifted a man out of himself and raised him to heaven. Their knees bend when they listen to it. That Confession of Faith, these collects for the sick, for the dying, in case of public misfortune or private grief, these lofty sentences of impassioned and sustained eloquence, transport a man to some unknown and august world. Let the fine gentlemen yawn, mock, and succeed in not understanding: I am sure that, of the others, many are moved. The idea of dark death and of the limitless ocean, to which the poor weak soul must descend, the thought of this invisible justice, everywhere present, ever foreseeing, on which the changing show of visible things depends, enlighten them with unexpected flashes. The physical world and its laws seem to them but a phantom and a figure; they see nothing more real than justice; it is the sum of humanity, as of nature. This is the deep sentiment which on Sunday closes the theatre, discourages pleasures, fills the churches; this it is which pierces the breastplate of the positive spirit and of corporeal dulness. This shopkeeper, who all the week has been counting his bales or drawing up columns of figures; this cattle-breeding squire, who can only bawl, drink, jump a fence; these yeomen, these cottagers, who in order to amuse themselves draw blood whilst boxing, or vie with each other in grinning through a horse-collar,—all these uncultivated souls, immersed in material life, receive thus from their religion a moral life. They love it; we hear it in the yells of a mob, rising like a thunderstorm,

when a rash hand touches or seems to touch the Church. We see it in the sale of Protestant devotional books; the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Whole Duty of Man* are alone able to force their way to the window-ledge of the yeoman and squire, where four volumes, their whole library, rest amid the fishing-tackle. We can only move the men of this race by moral reflections and religious emotions. The cooled Puritan spirit still broods underground, and is drawn in the only direction where fuel, air, fire, and action are to be found.

We obtain a glimpse of it when we look at the sects. In France, Jansenists and Jesuits seem to be puppets of another century, fighting for the amusement of this age. Here Quakers, Independents, Baptists exist, serious, honoured, recognised by the State, distinguished by their able writers, their deep scholars, their men of worth, their founders of nations.¹ Their piety causes their disputes; it is because they will believe, that they differ in belief: the only men without religion are those who do not care for religion. A motionless faith is soon a dead faith; and when a man becomes a sectarian, it is because he is fervent. This Christianity lives because it is developed; we see the sap, always flowing from the Protestant inquiry and faith, re-enter the old dogmas, dried up for fifteen hundred years. Voltaire, when he came to England, was surprised to find Arians, and amongst them the first thinkers in England—Clarke, Newton himself. Not only dogma, but feeling, is renewed; beyond the speculative Arians were the practical Methodists; behind Newton and Clarke came Whitfield and Wesley.

No history more deeply illustrates the English

¹ William Penn.

character than that of these two men. In spite of Hume and Voltaire, they founded a monastical and convulsionary sect, and triumph through austerity, and exaggeration, which would have ruined them in France. Wesley was a scholar, an Oxford student, and he believed in the devil; he attributes to him sickness, nightmare, storms, earthquakes. His family heard supernatural noises; his father had been thrice pushed by a ghost; he himself saw the hand of God in the commonest events of life. One day at Birmingham, overtaken by a hailstorm, he felt that he received this warning, because at table he had not sufficiently exhorted the people who dined with him; when he had to determine on anything, he opened the Bible at random for a text, in order to decide. At Oxford he fasted and wearied himself until he spat blood, and almost died; at sea, when he departed for America, he only ate bread, and slept on deck; he lived the life of an apostle, giving away all that he earned, travelling and preaching all the year, and every year, till the age of eighty-eight;¹ it has been reckoned that he gave away thirty thousand pounds, travelled about a hundred thousand miles, and preached forty thousand sermons. What could such a man have done in France in the eighteenth century? Here he was listened to and followed, at his death he had eighty thousand disciples; now he has a million. The qualms of conscience, which forced him in this direction, compelled others to follow in his footsteps. Nothing is more striking than the con-

¹ On one tour he slept three weeks on the bare boards. One day, at three in the morning, he said to Nelson, his companion: "Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer, I have one whole side yet; for the skin is off but on one side."—*Southey's Life of Wesley*, 2 vols., 1820, II. ch. xv. 54.

fessions of his preachers, mostly low-born and laymen. George Story had the spleen, dreamed and mused gloomily; took to slandering himself and the occupations of men. Mark Bond thought himself damned, because when a boy he had once uttered a blasphemy; he read and prayed unceasingly and in vain, and at last in despair he enlisted, with the hope of being killed. John Haime had visions, howled, and thought he saw the devil. Another, a baker, had scruples because his master continued to bake on Sunday, wasted away with anxiety, and soon was nothing but a skeleton. Such are the timorous and impassioned souls which become religious and enthusiastic. They are numerous in this land, and on them doctrine took hold. Wesley declares that "A string of opinions is no more Christian faith than a string of beads is Christian holiness. It is not an assent to any opinion, or any number of opinions." "This justifying faith implies not only the personal revelation, the inward evidence of Christianity, but likewise a sure and firm confidence in the individual believer that Christ died for *his* sin, loved *him*, and gave his life for *him*."¹ "By a Christian, I mean one who so believes in Christ, as that sin hath no more dominion over him."²

The faithful feels in himself the touch of a superior hand, and the birth of an unknown being. The old man has disappeared, the new man has taken his place, pardoned, purified, transfigured, steeped in joy and confidence, inclined to good as strongly as he was once drawn to evil. A miracle has been wrought, and it can be wrought at any moment, suddenly, under any circumstances, without warning. Some sinner, the oldest and

¹ Southey's *Life of Wesley*, ii. 176.

² *Ibid.* i. 251.

most hardened, without wishing it, without having dreamed of it, falls down weeping, his heart melted by grace. The hidden thoughts, which fermented long in these gloomy imaginations, break out suddenly into storms, and the dull brutal mood is shaken by nervous fits which it had not known before. Wesley, Whitefield, and their preachers went all over England preaching to the poor, the peasants, the workmen in the open air, sometimes to a congregation of twenty thousand people. "The fire is kindled in the country." There was sobbing and crying. At Kingswood, Whitefield, having collected the miners, a savage race, "saw the white gutters made by the tears which plentifully fell down from their black cheeks, black as they came out from their coal-pits."¹ Some trembled and fell; others had transports of joy, ecstasies. Southey writes thus of Thomas Olivers: "His heart was broken, nor could he express the strong desires which he felt for righteousness. . . . He describes his feelings during a *Te Deum* at the cathedral, as if he had done with earth, and was praising God before His throne."² The god and the brute, which each man carries in himself, were let loose; the physical machine was upset; emotion was turned into madness, and the madness became contagious. An eye-witness says:

"At Everton some were shrieking, some roaring aloud. . . . The most general was a loud breathing, like that of people half strangled and gasping for life; and, indeed, almost all the cries were like those of human creatures dying in bitter anguish. Great numbers wept without any noise; others fell down as dead. . . . I stood upon the pew-seat, as did a young man in

¹ Southey's *Life of Wesley*, i. ch. vi. 236. ² *Ibid.* ii. ch. xvii. 111.

the opposite pew, an able-bodied, fresh, healthy, countryman, but in a moment, when he seemed to think of nothing else, down he dropt, with a violence inconceivable. . . . I heard the tamping of his feet, ready to break the boards, as he lay in strong convulsions at the bottom of the pew. . . . I saw a sturdy boy, about eight years old, who roared above his fellows ; . . . his face was red as scarlet ; and almost all on whom God laid his hand, turned either very red or almost black.”¹

Elsewhere, a woman, disgusted with this madness, wished to leave, but had only gone a few steps when she fell into as violent fits as others. Conversions followed these transports ; the converted paid their debts, forswore drunkenness, read the Bible, prayed, and went about exhorting others. Wesley collected them into societies, formed “ classes ” for mutual examination and edification, submitted spiritual life to a methodic discipline, built chapels, chose preachers, founded schools, organised enthusiasm. To this day his disciples spend very large sums every year in missions to all parts of the world, and on the banks of the Mississippi and the Ohio their shoutings repeat the violent enthusiasm and the conversions of primitive inspiration. The same instinct is still revealed by the same signs ; the doctrine of grace survives in uninterrupted energy, and the race, as in the sixteenth century, puts its poetry into the exaltation of the moral sense.

V.

A sort of theological smoke covers and hides this glowing hearth which burns in silence. A stranger who, at this time, had visited the country, would see in this religion only a choking vapour of arguments, controversies, and sermons. All those celebrated divines and preachers, Barrow, Tillotson, South, Stillingfleet, Sher-

¹ Southey's *Life of Wesley*, ii. ch. xxiv. 320.

lock, Burnet, Baxter, Barclay, preached, says Addison, like automatons, monotonously, without moving their arms. For a Frenchman, for Voltaire, who did read them, as he read everything, what a strange reading! Here is Tillotson first, the most authoritative of all, a kind of father of the Church, so much admired that Dryden tells us that he learned from him the art of writing well, and that his sermons, the only property which he left his widow, were bought by a publisher for two thousand five hundred guineas. This work has, in fact, some weight; there are three folio volumes, each of seven hundred pages. To open them, a man must be a critic by profession, or be possessed by an absolute desire to be saved. And now let us open them. "The Wisdom of being Religious,"—such is his first sermon, much celebrated in his time, and the foundation of his success:

"These words consist of two propositions, which are not distinct in sense; . . . So that they differ only as cause and effect, which by a metonymy, used in all sorts of authors, are frequently put one for another."¹

This opening makes us uneasy. Is this great orator a teacher of grammar?

"Having thus explained the words, I come now to consider the proposition contained in them, which is this:

"That religion is the best knowledge and wisdom.

"This I shall endeavour to make good these three ways:—

"1st. By a direct proof of it;

"2d. By shewing on the contrary the folly and ignorance of irreligion and wickedness;

"3d. By vindicating religion from those common imputations which seem to charge it with ignorance or imprudence. I begin with the direct proof of this."² . . .

¹ Tillotson's *Sermons*, 10 vols, 1760, i. 1.

² *Ibid.* i. 5.

JOSEPH ADDISON



Thereupon he gives his divisions. What a heavy demonstrator! We are tempted to turn over the leaves only, and not to read them. Let us examine his forty-second sermon: "Against Evil-speaking:"

"*Firstly*: I shall consider the nature of this vice, and wherein it consists.

"*Secondly*: I shall consider the due extent of this prohibition, To speak evil of no man.

"*Thirdly*: I shall show the evil of this practice, both in the causes and effects of it.

"*Fourthly*: I shall add some further considerations to dissuade men from it.

"*Fifthly*: I shall give some rules and directions for the prevention and cure of it."¹

What a style! and it is the same throughout. There is nothing lifelike; it is a skeleton, with all its joints coarsely displayed. All the ideas are ticketed and numbered. The schoolmen were not worse. Neither rapture nor vehemence; no wit, no imagination, no original and brilliant idea, no philosophy; nothing but quotations of mere scholarship, and enumerations from a handbook. The dull argumentative reason comes with its pigeon-holed classifications upon a great truth of the heart or an impassioned word from the Bible, examines it "positively and negatively," draws thence "a lesson and an encouragement," arranges each part under its heading, patiently, indefatigably, so that sometimes three whole sermons are needed to complete the division and the proof, and each of them contains in its exordium the methodical abstract of all the points treated and the arguments supplied. Just so were the

¹ Tillotson's *Sermons*, iii. 2.

discussions of the Sorbonne carried on. At the court of Louis XIV. Tillotson would have been taken for a man who had run away from a seminary; Voltaire would have called him a village curé. He has all that is necessary to shock men of the world, nothing to attract them. For he does not address men of the world, but Christians; his hearers neither need nor desire to be goaded or amused; they do not ask for analytical refinements, novelties in matter of feeling. They come to have Scripture explained to them, and morality demonstrated. The force of their zeal is only manifested by the gravity of their attention. Let others have a text as a mere pretext; as for them, they cling to it: it is the very word of God, they cannot dwell on it too much. They must have the sense of every word hunted out, the passage interpreted phrase by phrase, in itself, by the context, by parallel passages, by the whole doctrine. They are willing to have the different readings, translations, interpretations expounded; they like to see the orator become a grammarian, a Hellenist, a scholiast. They are not repelled by all this dust of scholarship, which rises from the folios to settle upon their countenance. And the precept being laid down, they demand an enumeration of all the reasons which support it; they wish to be convinced, carry away in their heads a provision of good approved motives to last the week. They came there seriously, as to their counting-house or their field, not to amuse themselves but to do some work, to toil and dig conscientiously in theology and logic, to amend and better themselves. They would be angry at being dazzled. Their great sense, their ordinary common sense, is much better pleased with cold discussions; they want inquiries and methodical reports

of morality, as if it was a subject of export and import duties, and treat conscience as port wine or herrings.

In this Tillotson is admirable. Doubtless he is pedantic, as Voltaire called him; he has all "the bad manners learned at the university;" he has not been "polished by association with women;" he is not like the French preachers, academicians, elegant discoursers, who by a courtly air, a well-delivered Advent sermon, the refinements of a purified style, earn the first vacant bishopric and the favour of good society. But he writes like a perfectly honest man; we can see that he is not aiming in any way at the glory of an orator; he wishes to persuade soundly, nothing more. We enjoy this clearness, this naturalness, this preciseness, this entire loyalty. In one of his sermons he says:

"Truth and reality have all the advantages of appearance, and many more. If the show of anything be good for anything, I am sure sincerity is better; for why does any man dissemble, or seem to be that which he is not, but because he thinks it good to have such a quality as he pretends to? For to counterfeit and dissemble, is to put on the appearance of some real excellency. Now, the best way in the world for a man to seem to be anything, is really to be what he would seem to be. Besides, that it is many times as troublesome to make good the pretence of a good quality, as to have it; and if a man have it not, it is ten to one but he is discovered to want it, and then all his pains and labour to seem to have it are lost. There is something unnatural in painting, which a skilful eye will easily discern from native beauty and complexion.

"It is hard to personate and act a part long; for where truth is not at the bottom, nature will always be endeavouring to return, and will peep out and betray herself one time or other. Therefore, if any man think it convenient to seem good, let him be so indeed, and then his goodness will appear

to everybody's satisfaction ; . . . so that, upon all accounts, sincerity is true wisdom."¹

We are led to believe a man who speaks thus ; we say to ourselves, "This is true, he is right, we must do as he says." The impression received is moral, not literary ; the sermon is efficacious, not rhetorical ; it does not please, it leads to action.

In this great manufactory of morality, where every loom goes on as regularly as its neighbour, with a monotonous noise, we distinguish two which sound louder and better than the rest—Barrow and South. Not that they were free from dulness. Barrow had all the air of a college pedant, and dressed so badly, that one day in London, before an audience who did not know him, he saw almost the whole congregation at once leave the church. He explained the word *εὐχαριστεῖν* in the pulpit with all the charm of a dictionary, commenting, translating, dividing, subdividing like the most formidable of scholiasts,² caring no more for the public than for himself ; so that once, when he had

¹ Tillotson's *Sermons*, iv. 15-16 ; Sermon 55, "Of Sincerity towards God and Man," John i. 47. This was the last sermon Tillotson preached ; July 29, 1694.—Tr.

² Barrow's *Theological Works*, 6 vols. Oxford, 1818, i. 141-142 ; Sermon viii. "The Duty of Thanksgiving," Eph. v. 20.

"These words, although (as the very syntax doth immediately discover) they bear a relation to, and have a fit coherence with, those that precede, may yet (especially considering St. Paul's style and manner of expression in the preceptive and exhortative parts of his Epistles), without any violence or prejudice on either hand, be severed from the context, and considered distinctly by themselves. . . . First, then, concerning the duty itself, *to give thanks*, or rather *to be thankful* (for *εὐχαριστεῖν* doth not only signify *gratias agere*, *reddere*, *dicere*, *to give*, *render*, or *declare thanks*, but also *gratias habere*, *grate affectum esse*, *to be thankfully disposed*, *to entertain a grateful affection*, *sensu*, or *memory*. . . . I say, concerning this duty itself (abstractedly

spoken for three hours and a half before the Lord Mayor, he replied to those who asked him if he was not tired, "I did, in fact, begin to be weary of standing so long." But the heart and mind were so full and so rich, that his faults became a power. He had a geometrical method and clearness,¹ an inexhaustible fertility, extraordinary impetuosity and tenacity of logic, writing the same sermon three or four times over, insatiable in his craving to explain and prove, obstinately confined to his already overflowing thoughts, with a minuteness of division, an exactness of connection, a superfluity of explanation, so astonishing that the attention of the hearer at last gives way; and yet the mind turns with the vast engine, carried away and doubled up as by the rolling weight of a flattening machine.

Let us listen to his sermon, "Of the Love of God." Never was a more copious and forcible analysis seen in England, so penetrating and unwearying a decomposition of an idea into all its parts, a more powerful logic, more rigorously collecting into one network all the threads of a subject :

"Although no such benefit or advantage can accrue to God, which may increase his essential and indefectible happiness ; no harm or damage can arrive that may impair it (for he can be neither really more or less rich, or glorious, or joyful than he is ; neither have our desire or our fear, our delight or our grief, our designs or our endeavours any object, any ground in those respects) ; yet hath he declared, that there be certain interests

considered), as it involves a respect to benefits or good things received ; so in its employment about them it imports, requires, or supposes these following particulars."

¹ He was a mathematician of the highest order, and had resigned his chair to Newton.

and concernments, which, out of his abundant goodness and condescension, he doth tender and prosecute as his own ; as if he did really receive advantage by the good, and prejudice by the bad success, respectively belonging to them ; that he earnestly desires and is greatly delighted with some things, very much dislikes and is grievously displeased with other things : for instance, that he bears a fatherly affection towards his creatures, and earnestly desires their welfare ; and delights to see them enjoy the good he designed them ; as also dislikes the contrary events ; doth commiserate and condole their misery ; that he is consequently well pleased when piety and justice, peace and order (the chief means conducing to our welfare) do flourish ; and displeased, when impiety and iniquity, dissension and disorder (those certain sources of mischief to us) do prevail ; that he is well satisfied with our rendering to him that obedience, honour, and respect, which are due to him ; and highly offended with our injurious and disrespectful behaviour toward him, in the commission of sin and violation of his most just and holy commandments ; so that there wants not sufficient matter of our exercising good-will both in affection and action toward God ; we are capable both of wishing and (in a manner, as he will interpret and accept it) of doing good to him, by our concurrence with him in promoting those things which he approves and delights in, and in removing the contrary." ¹

This entanglement wearies us, but what a force and dash is there in this well considered and complete thought ! Truth thus supported on all its foundations can never be shaken. Rhetoric is absent. There is no art here ; the whole oratorical art consists in the desire thoroughly to explain and prove what he has to say. He is even unstudied and artless ; and it

¹ Barrow's *Theological Works*, i., Sermon xxiii. 500-501.

is just this ingenuousness which raises him to the antique level. We may meet with an image in his writings which seems to belong to the finest period of Latin simplicity and dignity :

“ The middle, we may observe, and the safest, and the fairest, and the most conspicuous places in cities are usually deputed for the erections of statues and monuments dedicated to the memory of worthy men, who have nobly deserved of their countries. In like manner should we in the heart and centre of our soul, in the best and highest apartments thereof, in the places most exposed to ordinary observation, and most secure from the invasions of worldly care, erect lively representations of, and lasting memorials unto, the divine bounty.”¹

There is here a sort of effusion of gratitude ; and at the end of the sermon, when we think him exhausted, the expansion becomes more copious by the enumeration of the unlimited blessings amidst which we move like fishes in the sea, not perceiving them, because we are surrounded and submerged by them. During ten pages the idea overflows in a continuous and similar phrase, without fear of crowding or monotony, in spite of all rules, so loaded are the heart and imagination, and so satisfied are they to bring and collect all nature as a single offering :

“ To him, the excellent quality, the noble end, the most obliging manner of whose beneficence doth surpass the matter thereof, and hugely augment the benefits : who, not compelled by any necessity, not obliged by any law (or previous compact), not induced by any extrinsic arguments, not inclined by our merits, not wearied with our importunities, not instigated by troublesome passions of pity, shame, or fear (as we are wont to be), not

¹ Barrow's *Theological Works*, i. 145 ; Sermon viii., “The Duty of Thanksgiving,” Eph. v. 20.

flattered with promises of recompense, nor bribed with expectation of emolument, thence to accrue unto himself; but being absolute master of his own actions, only both lawgiver and counsellor to himself, all-sufficient, and incapable of admitting any accession to his perfect blissfulness; most willingly and freely, out of pure bounty and good-will, is our Friend and Benefactor; preventing not only our desires, but our knowledge; surpassing not our deserts only, but our wishes, yea, even our conceits, in the dispensation of his inestimable and unrequitable benefits; having no other drift in the collation of them, beside our real good and welfare, our profit and advantage, our pleasure and content."¹

Zealous energy and lack of taste; such are the features common to all this eloquence. Let us leave this mathematician, this man of the closet, this antique man, who proves too much and is too eager, and let us look out amongst the men of the world him who was called the wittiest of ecclesiastics, Robert South, as different from Barrow in his character and life as in his works and his mind; armed for war, an impassioned royalist, a partisan of divine right and passive obedience, an acrimonious controversialist, a defamer of the dissenters, a foe to the Act of Toleration, who never avoided in his enmities the license of an insult or a foul word. By his side Father Bridaine,² who seems so coarse to the French, was polished. His sermons are like a conversation of that time; and we know in what style they conversed then in England. South is not afraid to use any popular and impassioned image. He sets forth little vulgar facts, with their low

¹ Barrow's *Theological Works*, i. 159-160, Sermon viii.

² Jacques Bridaine (1701-1767), a celebrated and zealous French preacher, whose sermons were always extempore, and hence not very cultivated and refined in style.—Tr.

and striking details. He never shrinks, he never minces matters ; he speaks the language of the people. His style is anecdotic, striking, abrupt, with change of tone, forcible and clownish gestures, with every species of originality, vehemence, and boldness. He sneers in the pulpit, he rails, he plays the mimic and comedian. He paints his characters as if he had them before his eyes. The audience will recognise the originals again in the streets ; they could put the names to his portraits. Read this bit on hypocrites :

“ Suppose a man infinitely ambitious, and equally spiteful and malicious ; one who poisons the ears of great men by venomous whispers, and rises by the fall of better men than himself ; yet if he steps forth with a Friday look and a Lenten face, with a blessed Jesu ! and a mournful ditty for the vices of the times ; oh ! then he is a saint upon earth : an Ambrose or an Augustine (I mean not for that earthly trash of book-learning ; for, alas ! such are above that, or at least that's above them), but for zeal and for fasting, for a devout elevation of the eyes, and a holy rage against other men's sins. And happy those ladies and religious dames, characterized in the 2d of Timothy, ch. iii. 6, who can have such self-denying, thriving, able men for their confessors ! and thrice happy those families where they vouchsafe to take their Friday night's refreshments ! and thereby demonstrate to the world what Christian abstinence, and what primitive, self-mortifying rigor there is in forbearing a dinner, that they may have the better stomach to their supper. In fine, the whole world stands in admiration of them ; fools are fond of them, and wise men are afraid of them ; they are talked of, they are pointed at ; and, as they order the matter, they draw the eyes of all men after them, and generally something else.”¹

¹ South's *Sermons*, 1715, 11 vols., vi. 110. The fourth and last discourse from those words in Isaiah v. 20, “ Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter ! ”—*Tr.*

A man so frank of speech was sure to commend frankness; he has done so with the bitter irony the brutality of a Wycherley. The pulpit had the plain-dealing and coarseness of the stage; and in this picture of forcible, honest men, whom the world considers as bad characters, we find the pungent familiarity of the *Plain Dealer*:

"Again, there are some, who have a certain ill-natured stiffness (forsooth) in their tongue, so as not to be able to applaud and keep pace with this or that self-admiring, vain-glorious Thraso, while he is pluming and praising himself, and telling fulsome stories in his own commendation for three or four hours by the clock, and at the same time reviling and throwing dirt upon all mankind besides.

"There is also a sort of odd ill-natured men, whom neither hopes nor fears, frowns nor favours, can prevail upon, to have any of the cast, beggarly, forlorn nieces or kinswomen of any lord or grandee, spiritual or temporal, trumped upon them.

"To which we may add another sort of obstinate ill-natured persons, who are not to be brought by any one's guilt or greatness, to speak or write, or to swear or lie, as they are bidden, or to give up their own consciences in a compliment to those, who have none themselves.

"And lastly, there are some, so extremely ill-natured, as to think it very lawful and allowable for them to be sensible when they are injured or oppressed, when they are slandered in their good names, and wronged in their just interests; and withal, to dare to own what they find, and feel without being such beasts of burden as to bear tamely whatsoever is cast upon them; or such spaniels as to lick the foot which kicks them, or to thank the goodly great one for doing them all these back favours."¹

In this eccentric style all blows tell; we might call it

¹ South's *Sermons*, vi. 118.

a boxing-match in which sneers inflict bruises. But see the effect of these churls' vulgarities. We issue thence with a soul full of energetic feeling; we have seen the very objects, as they are, without disguise; we find ourselves battered, but seized by a vigorous hand. This pulpit is effective; and indeed, as compared with the French pulpit, this is its characteristic. These sermons have not the art and artifice, the propriety and moderation of French sermons; they are not, like the latter, monuments of style, composition, harmony, veiled science, tempered imagination, disguised logic, sustained good taste, exquisite proportion, equal to the harangues of the Roman forum and the Athenian agora. They are not classical. No, they are practical. A big workman-like shovel, roughly handled, and encrusted with pedantic rust, was necessary to dig in this coarse civilisation. The delicate French gardening would have done nothing with it. If Barrow is redundant, Tillotson heavy, South vulgar, the rest unreadable, they are all convincing; their sermons are not models of elegance, but instruments of edification. Their glory is not in their books, but in their works. They have framed morals, not literary productions.

VI.

To form morals is not all; there are creeds to be defended. We must combat doubt as well as vice, and theology goes side by side with preaching. It abounds at this moment in England. Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, Quakers, Baptists, Antitrinitarians, wrangle with each other, "as heartily as a Jansenist damns a Jesuit," and are never tired of forging weapons. What is there to take hold of and preserve

in all this arsenal ? In France at least theology is lofty ; the fairest flowers of mind and genius have there grown over the briars of scholastics ; if the subject repels, the dress attracts. Pascal and Bossuet, Fénelon and La Bruyère, Voltaire, Diderot and Montesquieu, friends and enemies, all have scattered their wealth of pearls and gold. Over the threadbare woof of barren doctrines the seventeenth century has embroidered a majestic stole of purple and silk ; and the eighteenth century, crumpling and tearing it, scatters it in a thousand golden threads, which sparkle like a ball-dress. But in England all is dull, dry, and gloomy ; the great men themselves, Addison and Locke, when they meddle in the defence of Christianity, become flat and wearisome. From Chillingworth to Paley, apologies, refutations, expositions, discussions, multiply and make us yawn ; they reason well, and that is all. The theologian enters on a campaign against the Papists of the seventeenth century and the Deists of the eighteenth,¹ like a tactician, by rule, taking a position on a principle, throwing up all around a breastwork of arguments, covering everything with texts, marching calmly underground in the long shafts which he has dug ; we approach and see a sallow-faced pioneer creep out, with frowning brow, stiff hands, dirty clothes ; he thinks he is protected from all attacks ; his eyes, glued to the ground, have not seen the broad level road beside his bastion, by which the enemy will outflank and surprise him. A sort of incurable mediocrity keeps men like him, mattock in hand, in their trenches, where no one

¹ I thought it necessary to look into the Socinian pamphlets, which have swarmed so much among us within a few years.—*Stillington, In Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity, 1697.*

is likely to pass. They understand neither their texts nor their formulas. They are impotent in criticism and philosophy. They treat the poetic figures of Scripture, the bold style, the approximations to improvisation, the mystical Hebrew emotion, the subtleties and abstractions of Alexandrian metaphysics, with the precision of a jurist and a psychologist. They wish actually to make of Scripture an exact code of prescriptions and definitions, drawn up by a convention of legislators. Open the first that comes to hand, one of the oldest—John Hales. He comments on a passage of St. Matthew, where a question arises on a matter forbidden on the Sabbath. What was this? "The disciples plucked the ears of corn and did eat them."¹ Then follow divisions and arguments raining down by myriads.² Take the most celebrated: Sherlock, applying the new psychology, invents an explanation of the Trinity, and imagines three divine souls, each knowing what passes in the others. Stillingfleet refutes Locke, who thought that the soul in the resurrection, though having a body, would not perhaps have exactly the same one in which it had lived. Let us look at the most illustrious of all, the learned Clarke, a mathematician, philosopher, scholar, theologian; he is busy patching up Arianism. The

¹ John Hales of Eaton, *Works*, 3 vols, 12mo, 1765, i. 4.

² He examines, amongst other things, "the sin against the Holy Ghost." They would very much like to know in what this consists. But nothing is more obscure. Calvin and other theologians each gave a different definition. After a minute dissertation, Hales concludes thus: "And though negative proofs from Scripture are not demonstrative, yet the general silence of the apostles may at least help to infer a probability that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is not committable by any Christian who lived not in the time of our Saviour" (1636). This is a training for argument. So, in Italy, the discussion about giving drawers to, or withholding them from the Capuchins, developed political and diplomatic ability.—*Ibid.* i. 36.

great Newton himself comments on the Apocalypse, and proves that the Pope is Antichrist. In vain have these men genius; as soon as they touch religion, they become antiquated, narrow-minded; they make no way; they are stubborn, and obstinately knock their heads against the same obstacle. They bury themselves, generation after generation, in the hereditary hole with English patience and conscientiousness, whilst the enemy marches by, a league off. Yet in the hole they argue; they square it, round it, face it with stones, then with bricks, and wonder that, notwithstanding all these expedients, the enemy marches on. I have read a host of these treatises, and I have not gleaned a single idea. We are annoyed to see so much lost labour, and amazed that, during so many generations, people so virtuous, zealous, thoughtful, loyal, well read, well trained in discussion, have only succeeded in filling the lower shelves of libraries. We muse sadly on this second scholastic theology, and end by perceiving that if it was without effect in the kingdom of science, it was because it only strove to bear fruit in the kingdom of action.

All these speculative minds were so in appearance only. They were apologists, and not inquirers. They busy themselves with morality, not with truth.¹ They would shrink from treating God as a hypothesis, and the Bible as a document. They would see a vicious tendency in the broad impartiality of criticism and

¹ "The Scripture is a book of morality, and not of philosophy. Everything there relates to practice. . . . It is evident, from a cursory view of the Old and New Testament, that they are miscellaneous books, some parts of which are history, others writ in a poetical style, and others prophetic; but the design of them all, is professedly to recommend the practice of true religion and virtue."—John Clarke, Chaplain of the King, 1721. [I have not been able to find these exact words in the edition of Clarke accessible to me.—Tr.]

15-16



HON. ROBERT BOYLE

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philosophy. They would have scruples of conscience if they indulged in free inquiry without limitation. In reality there is a sort of sin in truly free inquiry, because it presupposes scepticism, abandons reverence, weighs good and evil in the same balance, and equally receives all doctrines, scandalous or edifying, as soon as they are proved. They banish these dissolving speculations; they look on them as occupations of the slothful; they seek from argument only motives and means for right conduct. They do not love it for itself; they repress it as soon as it strives to become independent; they demand that reason shall be Christian and Protestant; they would give it the lie under any other form; they reduce it to the humble position of a handmaid, and set over it their own inner biblical and utilitarian sense. In vain did free-thinkers arise in the beginning of the century; forty years later they were drowned in forgetfulness.¹ Deism and atheism were in England only a transient eruption developed on the surface of the social body, in the bad air of the great world and the plethora of native energy. Professed irreligious men, Toland, Tindal, Mandeville, Bolingbroke, met foes stronger than themselves. The leaders of experimental philosophy,² the most learned and accredited of the scholars of the age,³ the most witty authors, the most beloved and able,⁴ all the authority of science and genius was employed in putting them down. Refutations abound. Every year, on the foundation of Robert Boyle, men noted for their talent

¹ Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

² Ray, Boyle, Barrow, Newton.

³ Bentley, Clarke, Warburton, Berkeley.

⁴ Locke, Addison, Swift, Johnson, Richardson.

or knowledge come to London to preach eight sermons, for proving the Christian religion against notorious infidels, viz., atheists, deists, pagans, Mohammedans, and Jews. And these apologies are solid, able to convince a liberal mind, infallible for the conviction of a moral mind. The clergymen who write them, Clarke, Bentley, Law, Watt, Warburton, Butler, are not below the lay science and intellect. Moreover, the lay element assists them. Addison writes the *Evidences of Christianity*, Locke the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, Ray the *Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of the Creation*. Over and above this concert of serious words is heard a ringing voice: Swift compliments with his terrible irony the elegant rogues who entertained the wise idea of abolishing Christianity. If they had been ten times more numerous they would not have succeeded, for they had nothing to substitute in its place. Lofty speculation, which alone could take the ground, was shown or declared to be impotent. On all sides philosophical conceptions dwindle or come to nought. If Berkeley lighted on one, the denial of matter, it stands alone, without influence on the public, as it were a theological *coup d'état*, like a pious man who wants to undermine immorality and materialism at their basis. Newton attained at most an incomplete idea of space, and was only a mathematician. Locke, almost as poor,¹ gropes about, hesitates, does little more than guess, doubt, start an opinion to advance and withdraw it by turns, not seeing its far-off consequences, nor, above all, exhausting anything. In short, he forbids himself lofty questions, and is very much inclined to forbid them to us. He has written a book to inquire

¹ "Paupertina philosophia," says Leibnitz.

what objects are within our reach, or above our comprehension. He seeks for our limitations; he soon finds them, and troubles himself no further. Let us shut ourselves in our own little domain, and work there diligently. Our business in this world is not to know all things, but those which regard the conduct of our life. If Hume, more bold, goes further, it is in the same track: he preserves nothing of lofty science; he abolishes speculation altogether. According to him, we know neither substances, causes, nor laws. When we affirm that an object is conjoined to another object, it is because we choose, by custom; "all events seem entirely loose and separate." If we give them "a tie," it is our imagination which creates it;¹ there is nothing true but doubt, and even we must doubt this. The conclusion is, that we shall do well to purge our mind of all theory, and only believe in order that we may act. Let us examine our wings only in order to cut them off, and let us confine ourselves to walking with our legs. So finished a pyrrhonism serves only to cast the world back upon established beliefs. In fact, Reid, being honest, is alarmed. He sees society broken up, God vanishing in smoke, the family evaporating in hypotheses. He objects as a father of a family, a good citizen, a religious man, and sets up common sense as

¹ After the constant conjunction of two objects—heat and flame, for instance, weight and solidity—we are determined by custom alone to expect the one from the appearance of the other. All inferences from experience are effects of custom, not of reasoning. . . . "Upon the whole, there appears not, throughout all nature, any one instance of connection which is conceivable by us. All events seem entirely loose and separate; one event follows another; but we can never observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined, but never connected."—Hume's *Essays*, 4 vols. 1760, iii. 117.

a sovereign judge of truth. Rarely, I think, in this world has speculation fallen lower. Reid does not even understand the systems which he discusses; he lifts his hands to heaven when he tries to expound Aristotle and Leibnitz. If some municipal body were to order a system, it would be this churchwarden-philosophy. In reality the men of this country did not care for metaphysics; to interest them it must be reduced to psychology. Then it becomes a science of observation, positive and useful, like botany; still the best fruit which they pluck from it is a theory of moral sentiments. In this domain Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Price, Smith, Ferguson, and Hume himself prefer to labour; here they find their most original and durable ideas. On this point the public instinct is so strong, that it enrols the most independent minds in its service, and only permit them the discoveries which benefit it. Except two or three, chiefly purely literary men, and who are French or Frenchified in mind, they busy themselves only with morals. This idea rallies round Christianity all the forces which in France Voltaire ranges against it. They all defend it on the same ground—as a tie for civil society, and as a support for private virtue. Formerly instinct supported it; now opinion consecrates it; and it is the same secret force which, by a gradual labour, at present adds the weight of opinion to the pressure of instinct. Moral sense, having preserved for it the fidelity of the lower classes, conquered for it the approval of the loftier intellects. Moral sense transfers it from the public conscience to the literary world, and from being popular makes it official.

VII.

We would hardly suspect this public tendency, after taking a distant view of the English constitution; but on a closer view it is the first thing we see. It appears to be an aggregate of privileges, that is, of sanctioned injustices. The truth is, that it is a body of contracts, that is, of recognised rights. Every one, great or small, has its own, which he defends with all his might. My lands, my property, my chartered right, whatsoever it be, antiquated, indirect, superfluous, individual, public, none shall touch it, king, lords, or commons. Is it of the value of five shillings? I will defend it as if it were worth a million sterling; it is my person which they would attack. I will leave my business, lose my time, throw away my money, form associations, pay fines, go to prison, perish in the attempt; no matter; I shall show that I am no coward, that I will not bend under injustice, that I will not yield a portion of my right.

By this sentiment Englishmen have conquered and preserved public liberty. This feeling, after they had dethroned Charles I. and James II., is shaped into principles in the declaration of 1689, and is developed by Locke in demonstrations.¹ "All men," says Locke, "are naturally in a state of perfect freedom, also of

¹ We must read Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*, London, 1680, on the prevailing theory, in order to see from what a quagmire of follies people emerged. He said that Adam, on his creation, had received an absolute and regal power over the universe; that in every society of men there was one legitimate king, the direct heir of Adam. "Some say it was by lot, and others that Noah sailed round the Mediterranean in ten years, and divided the world into Asia, Africa, and Europe" (p. 16) —portions for his three sons. Compare Boesuet, *Politique fondée sur l'Écriture*. At this epoch moral science was being emancipated from theology.

equality."¹ "In the State of Nature every one has the Executive power of the Law of Nature,"² *i.e.* of judging, punishing, making war, ruling his family and dependents. "There only is political society where every one of the members hath quitted this natural Power, resign'd it up into the Hands of the Community in all Cases that exclude him not from appealing for Protection to the Law established by it."³

"Those who are united into one body and have a common established law and judicature to appeal to, with authority . . . to punish offenders, are in civil society one with another."⁴ As for the ruler (they are ready to tell you), he ought to be absolute . . . Because he has power to do more hurt and wrong, 'tis right when he does it. . . . This is to think, that men are so foolish, that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by polecats or foxes; but are content, nay think it safety, to be devoured by lions.⁵ The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on the bonds of civil society, is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community, for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any, that are not of it."⁶

Umpires, rules of arbitration, this is all which their federation can impose upon them. They are freemen, who, having made a mutual treaty, are still free. Their society does not found, but guarantees their rights. And official acts here sustain abstract theory. When Parliament declares the throne vacant, its first argument is, that the king has violated the original contract by which he was king. When the Commons

¹ Locke, *Of Civil Government*, 1714, book ii. ch. ii. § 4.

² *Ibid.* § 13.

³ *Ibid.* ii. ch. vii. § 87.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* ii. ch. vii. § 93.

⁶ *Ibid.* ii. ch. viii. § 95.

impeach Sacheverell, it was in order publicly to maintain that the constitution of England was founded on a contract, and that the subjects of this kingdom have, in their different public and private capacities, as legal a title to the possession of the rights accorded to them by law, as the prince has to the possession of the crown. When Lord Chatham defended the election of Wilkes, it was by laying down that the rights of the greatest and of the meanest subjects now stand upon the same foundation, the security of law common to all . . . When the people had lost their rights, those of the peerage would soon become insignificant. It was no supposition or philosophy which founded them, but an act and deed, *Magna Charta*, the *Petition of Rights*, the *Habeas Corpus Act*, and the whole body of the statute laws.

These rights are there, inscribed on parchments, stored up in archives, signed, sealed, authentic; those of the farmer and prince are traced on the same page, in the same ink, by the same writer; both are on an equality on this vellum; the gloved hand clasps the horny palm. What though they are unequal? It is by mutual accord; the peasant is as much a master in his cottage, with his rye-bread and his nine shillings a week,¹ as the Duke of Marlborough in Blenheim Castle, with his many thousands a year in places and pensions.

There they are, these men, standing erect and ready to defend themselves. Pursue this sentiment of right in the details of political life; the force of brutal temperament and concentrated or savage passions provides arms. If we go to an election, the first thing we see

¹ De Foe's estimate.

is the full tables.¹ They cram themselves at the candidate's expense: ale, gin, brandy are set flowing without concealment; the victuals descend into their electoral stomachs, and their faces grow red. At the same time they become furious. "Every glass they pour down serves to increase their animosity. Many an honest man, before as harmless as a tame rabbit, when loaded with a single election dinner, has become more dangerous than a charged culverin."² The wrangle turns into a fight, and the pugnacious instinct, once loosed, craves for blows. The candidates bawl against each other till they are hoarse. They are chaired, to the great peril of their necks; the mob yells, cheers, grows warm with the motion, the defiance, the row; big words of patriotism peal out, anger and drink inflame their blood, fists are clenched, cudgels are at work, and bulldog passions regulate the greatest interests of the country. Let all beware how they draw these passions down on their heads: Lords, Commons, King, they will spare no one; and when Government would oppress a man in spite of them, they will compel Government to suppress their own law.

They are not to be muzzled, they make that a matter of pride. With them, pride assists instinct in defending the right. Each feels that "his house is his

¹ "Their eating, indeed, amazes me; had I five hundred heads, and were each head furnished with brains, yet would they all be insufficient to compute the number of cows, pigs, geese, and turkies which upon this occasion die for the good of their country! . . . On the contrary, they seem to lose their temper as they lose their appetites; every morsel they swallow serves to increase their animosity . . . The mob meet upon the debate, fight themselves sober, and then draw off to get drunk again, and charge for another encounter."—Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, Letter cxii., "An Election described." See also Hogarth's prints.

² *Ibid.*

castle," and that the law keeps guard at his door. Each tells himself that he is defended against private insolence, that the public arbitrary power will never touch him, that he has "his body," and can answer blows by blows, wounds by wounds, that he will be judged by an impartial jury and a law common to all. "Even if an Englishman," says Montesquieu, "has as many enemies as hairs on his head, nothing will happen to him. The laws there were not made for one more than for another; each looks on himself as a king, and the men of this nation are more confederates than fellow-citizens." This goes so far, "that there is hardly a day when some one does not lose respect for the king. Lately my Lady Bell Molineux, a regular virago, sent to have the trees pulled up from a small piece of land which the queen had bought for Kensington, and went to law with her, without having wished, under any pretext, to come to terms with her; she made the queen's secretary wait three hours."¹ "When Englishmen come to France, they are deeply astonished to see the sway of 'the king's good pleasure,' the Bastille, the *lettres de cachet*; a gentleman who dare not live on his estate in the country, for fear of the governor of the province; a groom of the king's chamber, who, for a cut with the razor, kills a poor barber with impunity."² In England, "one man does not fear another." If we converse with any of them, we will find how greatly this security raises their hearts and courage. A sailor who rows Voltaire about, and may be pressed next day into the fleet, prefers his condition to that of the Frenchman, and looks on him with pity, whilst taking his five

¹ Montesquieu, *Notes sur l'Angleterre*.

² Smollett, *Peregrine Pickle*, ch. 40.

shillings. The vastness of their pride breaks forth at every step and in every page. An Englishman, says Chesterfield, thinks himself equal to beating three Frenchmen. They would willingly declare that they are in the herd of men as bulls in a herd of cattle. We hear them bragging of their boxing, of their meat and ale, of all that can support the force and energy of their virile will. Roast-beef and beer make stronger arms than cold water and frogs.¹ In the eyes of the vulgar, the French are starved wigmakers, papists, and serfs, an inferior kind of creatures, who can neither call their bodies nor their souls their own, puppets and tools in the hands of a master and a priest. As for themselves,

“Stern o’er each bosom reason holds her state
 With daring aims irregularly great.
 Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
 I see the lords of human kind pass by;
 Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
 By forms unfashion’d, fresh from nature’s hand,
 Fierce in their native hardness of soul,
 True to imagin’d right, above control,
 While even the peasant boasts these rights to scan,
 And learns to venerate himself as man.”²

Men thus constituted can become impassioned in public concerns, for they are their own concerns; in France, they are only the business of the king and of Madame de Pompadour.³ In England, political parties are as ardent as sects: High Church and Low Church, capitalists and landed proprietors, court nobility and

¹ See Hogarth’s prints.

² Goldsmith’s *Traveller*.

³ Chesterfield observes that a Frenchman of his time did not understand the word Country; you must speak to him of his Prince.

County families, they have their dogmas, their theories, their manners, and their hatreds, like Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Quakers. The country squire rails, over his wine, at the House of Hanover, drinks to the king over the water; the Whig in London, on the 30th of January, drinks to the man in the mask,¹ and then to the man who will do the same thing without a mask. They imprisoned, exiled, beheaded each other, and Parliament resounded daily with the fury of their animadversions. Political, like religious life, wells up and overflows, and its outbursts only mark the force of the flame which nourishes it. The passion of parties, in state affairs as in matters of belief, is a proof of zeal; constant quiet is only general indifference; and if people fight at elections, it is because they take an interest in them. Here "a tiler had the newspaper brought to him on the roof that he might read it." A stranger who reads the papers "would think the country on the eve of a revolution." When Government takes a step, the public feels itself involved in it; its honour and its property are being disposed of by the minister; let the minister beware if he disposes of them ill. With the French, M. de Conflans, who lost his fleet through cowardice, is punished by an epigram; here, Admiral Byng, who was too prudent to risk his, was shot. Every man in his due position, and according to his power, takes part in public business: the mob broke the heads of those who would not drink Dr. Sacheverell's health; gentlemen came in mounted troops to meet him. Some public favourite or enemy is always exciting open demonstrations. One day it is Pitt whom the people cheer, and on whom the municipal corpora-

¹ The executioner of Charles I.

tions bestow many gold boxes ; another day it is Grenville, whom people go to hiss when coming out of the house ; then again Lord Bute, whom the queen loves, who is hissed, and who is burned under the effigy of a boot, a pun on his name, whilst the princess of Wales was burned under the effigy of a petticoat ; or the Duke of Bedford, whose town house is attacked by a mob, and who is only saved by a garrison of horse and foot ; Wilkes, whose papers the Government seize, and to whom the jury assign one thousand pounds damages. Every morning appear newspapers and pamphlets to discuss affairs, criticise characters, denounce by name lords, orators, ministers, the king himself. He who wants to speak speaks. In this wrangle of writings and associations opinion swells, mounts like a wave, and falling upon Parliament and Court, drowns intrigue and carries away all differences. After all, in spite of the rotten boroughs, it is public opinion which rules. What though the king be obstinate, the men in power band together ? Public opinion growls, and everything bends or breaks. The Pitts rose as high as they did, only because public opinion raised them, and the independence of the individual ended in the sovereignty of the people.

In such a state, " all passions being free ; hatred, envy, jealousy, the fervour for wealth and distinction, would be displayed in all their fulness." ¹ We can imagine with what force and energy eloquence must have been implanted and flourished. For the first time since the fall of the ancient tribune, it found a soil in which it could take root and live, and a harvest of orators sprang up, equal, in the diversity of their talents, the energy of their convictions, and the magnificence of their style,

¹ Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des lois*, book xix. ch. 27.

to that which once covered the Greek *agora* and the Roman *forum*. For a long time it seemed that liberty of speech, experience in affairs, the importance of the interests involved, and the greatness of the rewards offered, should have forced its growth; but eloquence came to nothing, encrusted in theological pedantry, or limited in local aims; and the privacy of the parliamentary sittings deprived it of half its force by removing from it the light of day. Now at last there was light; publicity, at first incomplete, then entire, gives Parliament the nation for an audience. Speech becomes elevated and enlarged at the same time that the public is polished and more numerous. Classical art, become perfect, furnishes method and development. Modern culture introduces into technical reasoning freedom of discourse and a breadth of general ideas. In place of arguing, men conversed; they were attorneys, they became orators. With Addison, Steele, and Swift, taste and genius invade politics. Voltaire cannot say whether the meditated harangues once delivered in Athens and Rome excelled the unpremeditated speeches of Windham, Carteret, and their rivals. In short, discourse succeeds in overcoming the dryness of special questions and the coldness of compassed action, which had so long restricted it; it boldly and irregularly extends its force and luxuriance; and in contrast with the fine abbés of the drawing-room, who in France compose their academical compliments, we see appear, the manly eloquence of Junius, Chatham, Fox, Pitt, Burke, and Sheridan.

I need not relate their lives nor unfold their characters; I should have to enter upon political details. Three of them, Lord Chatham, Fox, and Pitt,

were ministers,¹ and their eloquence is part of their power and their acts. That eloquence is the concern of those men who may record their political history; I can simply take note of its tone and accent.

VIII.

An extraordinary afflatus, a sort of quivering of intense determination, runs through all these speeches. Men speak, and they speak as if they fought. No caution, politeness, restraint. They are unfettered, they abandon themselves, they hurl themselves onward; and if they restrain themselves, it is only that they may strike more pitilessly and more forcibly. When the elder Pitt first filled the House with his vibrating voice, he already possessed his indomitable audacity. In vain Walpole tried to "muzzle him," then to crush him; his sarcasm was sent back to him with a prodigality of outrages, and the all-powerful minister bent, smitten with the truth of the biting insult which the young man inflicted on him. A lofty haughtiness, only surpassed by that of his son, an arrogance which reduced his colleagues to the rank of subalterns, a Roman patriotism which demanded for England a universal tyranny, an ambition lavish of money and men, gave the nation its rapacity and its fire, and only saw rest in far vistas of dazzling glory and limitless power, an imagination which brought into Parliament the vehemence and declamation of the stage, the brilliancy of fitful inspiration, the bold-

¹ Junius wrote anonymously, and critics have not yet been able with certainty to reveal his true name. Most probably he was Sir Philip Francis.

ness of poetic imagery. Such are the sources of his eloquence :

“ *But yesterday, and England might have stood against the world ; now none so poor to do her reverence.*

“ My Lords, YOU CANNOT CONQUER AMERICA.

“ We shall be forced ultimately to retract ; let us retract while we can, not when we must. I say we must necessarily undo these violent oppressive Acts : they must be repealed—you will repeal them ; I pledge myself for it, that you will in the end repeal them ; I stake my reputation on it. I will consent to be taken for an idiot, if they are not finally repealed.

“ You may swell every expense, and every effort, still more extravagantly ; pile and accumulate every assistance you can buy or borrow ; traffic and barter with every little pitiful German prince, that sells and sends his subjects to the shambles of a foreign prince ; your efforts are for ever vain and impotent—doubly so from this mercenary aid on which you rely ; for it irritates, to an incurable resentment, the minds of your enemies. To overrun them with the mercenary sons of rapine and plunder ; devoting them and their possessions to the rapacity of hireling cruelty ! If I were an American as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I never would lay down my arms—never—never—never !

“ But, my Lords, who is the man, that in addition to these disgraces and mischiefs of our army, has dared to authorize and associate to our arms the tomahawk and scalping-knife of the savage ? To call into civilised alliance the wild and inhuman savage of the woods ; to delegate to the merciless Indian the defence of disputed rights, and to wage the horrors of barbarous war against our brethren ? My Lords, these enormities cry aloud for redress and punishment ; unless thoroughly done away, it will be a stain on the national character—it is a violation of the constitution—I believe it is against law.”¹

¹ *Anecdotes and Speeches of the Earl of Chatham*, 7th ed., 3 vols., 1810, ii. ch. 42 and 44.

There is a touch of Milton and Shakspeare in this tragic pomp, in this impassioned solemnity, in the sombre and violent brilliancy of this overstrung and overloaded style. In such superb and blood-like purple are English passions clad, under the folds of such a banner they fall into battle array; the more powerfully that amongst them there is one altogether holy, the sentiment of right, which rallies, occupies, and ennobles them :

"I rejoice that America has resisted. Three millions of people so dead to all the feelings of liberty, as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of the rest."¹

"Let the sacredness of their property remain inviolate; let it be taxable only by their own consent given in their provincial assemblies; else it will cease to be property.

"This glorious spirit of Whiggism animates three millions in America, who prefer poverty with liberty to gilded chains and sordid affluence, and who will die in defence of their rights as men, as freemen. . . . The spirit which now resists your taxation in America is the same which formerly opposed loans, benevolences, and ship money in England; the same spirit which called all England on its legs, and by the Bill of Rights vindicated the English constitution; the same spirit which established the great fundamental, essential maxim of your liberties; that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent.

"As an Englishman by birth and principle, I recognise to the Americans their supreme unalienable right in their property, a right which they are justified in the defence of to the last extremity."²

If Pitt sees his own right, he sees that of others

¹ *Anecdotes and Speeches of the Earl of Chatham*, ii. ch. 29.

² *Ibid.* ii. ch. 42.

too ; it was with this idea that he moved and managed England. For it, he appealed to Englishmen against themselves ; and in spite of themselves they recognised their dearest instinct in this maxim, that every human will is inviolable in its limited and legal province, and that it must put forth its whole strength against the slightest usurpation.

Unrestrained passions and the most manly sentiment of right ; such is the abstract of all this eloquence. Instead of an orator, a public man, let us take a writer, a private individual ; let us look at the letters of Junius, which, amidst national irritation and anxiety, fell one by one like drops of fire on the fevered limbs of the body politic. If he makes his phrases concise, and selects his epithets, it was not from a love of style, but in order the better to stamp his insult. Oratorical artifices in his hand become instruments of torture, and when he files his periods it was to drive the knife deeper and surer ; with what audacity of denunciation, with what sternness of animosity, with what corrosive and burning irony, applied to the most secret corners of private life, with what inexorable persistence of calculated and meditated persecution, the quotations alone will show. He writes to the Duke of Bedford :

“ My lord, you are so little accustomed to receive any marks of respect or esteem from the public, that if, in the following lines, a compliment or expression of applause should escape me, I fear you would consider it as a mockery of your established character, and perhaps an insult to your understanding.”¹

He writes to the Duke of Grafton :

¹ *Junius' Letters*, 2 vols., 1772, xxiii. i. 162.

"There is something in both your character and conduct which distinguishes you not only from all other ministers, but from all other men. It is not that you do wrong by design, but that you should never do right by mistake. It is not that your indolence and your activity have been equally misapplied, but that the first uniform principle, or, if I may call it, the genius of your life, should have carried you through every possible change and contradiction of conduct, without the momentary imputation or colour of a virtue; and that the wildest spirit of inconsistency should never once have betrayed you into a wise or honourable action."¹

Junius goes on, fiercer and fiercer; even when he sees the minister fallen and dishonoured, he is still savage.

It is vain that he confesses aloud that in the state in which he is, the Duke might "disarm a private enemy of his resentment." He grows worse:

"You have every claim to compassion that can arise from misery and distress. The condition you are reduced to would disarm a private enemy of his resentment, and leave no consolation to the most vindictive spirit, but that such an object, as you are, would disgrace the dignity of revenge. . . . For my own part, I do not pretend to understand those prudent forms of decorum, those gentle rules of discretion, which some men endeavour to unite with the conduct of the greatest and most hazardous affairs. . . . I should scorn to provide for a future retreat, or to keep terms with a man who preserves no measures with the public. Neither the abject submission of deserting his post in the hour of danger, nor even the sacred shield of cowardice, should protect him. I would pursue him through life, and try the last exertion of my abilities to preserve the perishable infamy of his name, and make it immortal."²

Except Swift, is there a human being who has more intentionally concentrated and intensified in his heart

¹ Junius' *Letters*, xii. i. 75.

² *Ibid.* xxxvi. ii. 56.

the venom of hatred? Yet this is not vile, for it thinks itself to be in the service of justice. Amidst these excesses, this is the persuasion which enhances them; these men tear one another; but they do not crouch; whoever their enemy be, they take their stand in front of him. Thus Junius addresses the king:

“SIR—It is the misfortune of your life, and originally the cause of every reproach and distress which has attended your government, that you should never have been acquainted with the language of truth until you heard it in the complaints of your people. It is not, however, too late to correct the error of your education. We are still inclined to make an indulgent allowance for the pernicious lessons you received in your youth, and to form the most sanguine hopes from the natural benevolence of your disposition. We are far from thinking you capable of a direct, deliberate purpose to invade those original rights of your subjects on which all their civil and political liberties depend. Had it been possible for us to entertain a suspicion so dishonourable to your character, we should long since have adopted a style of remonstrance very distant from the humility of complaint. . . . The people of England are loyal to the House of Hanover, not from a vain preference of one family to another, but from a conviction that the establishment of that family was necessary to the support of their civil and religious liberties. This, Sir, is a principle of allegiance equally solid and rational; fit for Englishmen to adopt, and well worthy of your Majesty’s encouragement. We cannot long be deluded by nominal distinctions. The name of Stuart, of itself, is only contemptible:—armed with the sovereign authority, their principles are formidable. The prince who imitates their conduct, should be warned by their example; and while he plumes himself upon the security of his title to the crown, should remember that, as it was acquired by one revolution, it may be lost by another.”¹

¹ *Junius’ Letters*, xxxv. ii. 29.

Let us look for less bitter souls, and try to encounter a sweeter accent. There is one man, Charles James Fox, happy from his cradle, who learned everything without study, whom his father trained in prodigality and recklessness, whom, from the age of twenty-one, the public voice proclaimed as the first in eloquence and the leader of a great party, liberal, humane, sociable, not frustrating these generous expectations, whose very enemies pardoned his faults, whom his friends adored, whom labour never wearied, whom rivals never embittered, whom power did not spoil; a lover of converse, of literature, of pleasure, who has left the impress of his rich genius in the persuasive abundance, in the fine character, the clearness and continuous ease of his speeches. Behold him rising to speak; think of the discretion he must use; he is a statesman, a premier, speaking in Parliament of the friends of the king, lords of the bedchamber, the noblest families of the kingdom, with their allies and connections around him; he knows that every one of his words will pierce like a fiery arrow into the heart and honour of five hundred men who sit to hear him. No matter, he has been betrayed; he will punish the traitors, and here is the pillory in which he sets "the janissaries of the bedchamber," who by the Prince's order have deserted him in the thick of the fight:

"The whole compass of language affords no terms sufficiently strong and pointed to mark the contempt which I feel for their conduct. It is an impudent avowal of political profligacy, as if that species of treachery were less infamous than any other. It is not only a degradation of a station which ought to be occupied only by the highest and most exemplary honour, but forfeits their claim to the characters of gentlemen, and reduces them to

a level with the meanest and the basest of the species ; it insults the noble, the ancient, and the characteristic independence of the English peerage, and is calculated to traduce and vilify the British legislature in the eyes of all Europe, and to the latest posterity. By what magic nobility can thus charm vice into virtue, I know not nor wish to know ; but in any other thing than politics, and among any other men than lords of the bed-chamber, such an instance of the grossest perfidy would, as it well deserves, be branded with infamy and execration.”¹

Then turning to the Commons :

“A Parliament thus fettered and controlled, without spirit and without freedom, instead of limiting, extends, substantiates, and establishes beyond all precedent, latitude, or condition, the prerogatives of the crown. But though the British House of Commons were so shamefully lost to its own weight in the constitution, were so unmindful of its former struggles and triumphs in the great cause of liberty and mankind, were so indifferent and treacherous to those primary objects and concerns for which it was originally instituted, I trust the characteristic spirit of this country is still equal to the trial ; I trust Englishmen will be as jealous of secret influence as superior to open violence ; I trust they are not more ready to defend their interests against foreign depredation and insult, than to encounter and defeat this midnight conspiracy against the constitution.”²

If such are the outbursts of a nature above all gentle and amiable, we can judge what the others must have been. A sort of impassioned exaggeration reigns in the debates to which the trial of Warren Hastings and the French Revolution gave rise, in the acrimonious rhetoric and forced declamation of Sheridan, in the pitiless sarcasm and sententious pomp of the younger

¹ *Fox's Speeches*, 6 vols., 1815, ii. 271 ; Dec. 17, 1783.

² *Ibid.* p. 268.

Pitt. These orators love the coarse vulgarity of gaudy colours; they hunt out accumulations of big words, contrasts symmetrically protracted, vast and resounding periods. They do not fear to repel; they crave effect. Force is their characteristic, and the characteristic of the greatest amongst them, the first mind of the age, Edmund Burke, of whom Dr. Johnson said: "Take up whatever topic you please, he (Burke) is ready to meet you."

Burke did not enter Parliament, like Pitt and Fox, in the dawn of his youth, but at thirty-five, having had time to train himself thoroughly in all matters, learned in law, history, philosophy, literature, master of such a universal erudition, that he has been compared to Bacon. But what distinguished him from all other men was a wide, comprehensive intellect, which, exercised by philosophical studies and writings,¹ seized the general aspects of things, and, beyond text, constitutions, and figures, perceived the invisible tendency of events and the inner spirit, covering with his contempt those pretended statesmen, a vulgar herd of common journeymen, denying the existence of everything not coarse or material, and who, far from being capable of guiding the grand movements of an empire, are not worthy to turn the wheel of a machine.

Beyond all those gifts, he possessed one of those fertile and precise imaginations which believe that finished knowledge is an inner view, which never quit a subject without having clothed it in its colours and forms, and which, passing beyond statistics and the rubbish of dry documents, recompose and reconstruct before the reader's eyes a distant country and a foreign nation, with its monuments, dresses, landscapes, and all the

¹ *An Inquiry into our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful.*

shifting detail of its aspects and manners. To all these powers of mind, which constitute a man of system, he added all those energies of heart which constitute an enthusiast. Poor, unknown, having spent his youth in compiling for the publishers, he rose, by dint of work and personal merit, with a pure reputation and an unscathed conscience, ere the trials of his obscure life or the seductions of his brilliant life had fettered his independence or tarnished the flower of his loyalty. He brought to politics a horror of crime, a vivacity and sincerity of conscience, a humanity, a sensibility, which seem only suitable to a young man. He based human society on maxims of morality, insisted upon a high and pure tone of feeling in the conduct of public business, and seemed to have undertaken to raise and authorise the generosity of the human heart. He fought nobly for noble causes; against the crimes of power in England, the crimes of the people in France, the crimes of monopolists in India. He defended, with immense research and unimpeached disinterestedness, the Hindoos tyrannised over by English greed:

“Every man of rank and landed fortune being long since extinguished, the remaining miserable last cultivator who grows to the soil after having his back scored by the farmer, has it again flayed by the whip of the assignee, and is thus by a ravenous because a short-lived succession of claimants lashed from oppressor to oppressor, whilst a single drop of blood is left as the means of extorting a single grain of corn.”¹

He made himself everywhere the champion of principle and the persecutor of vice; and men saw

¹ Burke's Works, 1808, 8 vols., iv. 286, *Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts*.

him bring to the attack all the forces of his wonderful knowledge, his lofty reason, his splendid style, with the unwearying and untempered ardour of a moralist and a knight.

Let us read him only several pages at a time : only thus he is great ; otherwise all that is exaggerated, commonplace, and strange, will arrest and shock us ; but if we give ourselves up to him, we will be carried away and captivated. The enormous mass of his documents rolls impetuously in a current of eloquence. Sometimes a spoken or written discourse needs a whole volume to unfold the train of his multiplied proofs and courageous anger. It is either the *exposé* of an administration, or the whole history of British India, or the complete theory of revolutions, and the political conditions, which comes down like a vast, overflowing stream, to dash with its ceaseless effort and accumulated mass against some crime that men would overlook, or some injustice which they would sanction. Doubtless there is foam on its eddies, mud in its bed : thousands of strange creatures sport wildly on its surface. Burke does not select, he lavishes ; he casts forth by myriads his teeming fancies, his emphasised and harsh words, declamations and apostrophes, jests and execrations, the whole grotesque or horrible assemblage of the distant regions and populous cities which his unwearied learning or fancy has traversed. He says, speaking of the usurious loans, at forty-eight per cent, and at compound interest, by which Englishmen had devastated India, that

“That debt forms the foul putrid mucus, in which are engendered the whole brood of creeping *ascarides*, all the endless involutions, the eternal knot, added to a knot of those inexpugn-

able tape-worms which devour the nutriment, and eat up the bowels of India." ¹

Nothing strikes him as excessive in speech, neither the description of tortures, nor the atrocity of his images, nor the deafening racket of his antitheses, nor the prolonged trumpet-blast of his curses, nor the vast oddity of his jests. To the Duke of Bedford, who had reproached him with his pension, he answers :

"The grants to the house of Russell were so enormous, as not only to outrage oeconomy, but even to stagger credibility. The duke of Bedford is the leviathan among all the creatures of the crown. He tumbles about his unwieldy bulk ; he plays and frolicks in the ocean of the royal bounty. Huge as he is, and whilst 'he lies floating many a rood,' he is still a creature. His ribs, his fins, his whalebone, his blubber, the very spiracles through which he spouts a torrent of brine against his origin, and covers me all over with the spray,—everything of him and about him is from the throne." ²

Burke has no taste, nor have his compeers. The fine Greek or French deduction has never found a place among the Germanic nations ; with them all is heavy or ill-refined. It is of no use for Burke to study Cicero, and to confine his dashing force in the orderly channels of Latin rhetoric ; he continues half a barbarian, battenning in exaggeration and violence ; but his fire is so sustained, his conviction so strong, his emotion so warm and abundant, that we give way to him, forget our repugnance, see in his irregularities and his outbursts only the outpourings of a great heart and a deep mind, too open and too full ; and we wonder with a

¹ Burke's Works, iv. 282.

² *Ibid.* viii. 35 ; *A Letter to a Noble Lord.*

sort of strange veneration at this extraordinary overflow, impetuous as a torrent, broad as a sea, in which the inexhaustible variety of colours and forms undulates beneath the sun of a splendid imagination, which lends to this muddy surge all the brilliancy of its rays.

IX.

If you wish for a comprehensive view of all these personages, study Sir Joshua Reynolds,¹ and then look at the fine French portraits of this time, the cheerful ministers, gallant and charming archbishops, Marshal de Saxe, who in the Strasburg monument goes down to his tomb with the grace and ease of a courtier on the staircase at Versailles. In England, under skies drowned in pallid mists, amid soft, vaporous clouds, appear expressive or contemplative heads: the rude energy of the character has not awed the artist; the coarse bloated animal; the strange and ominous bird of prey; the growling jaws of the fierce bulldog—he has put them all in: levelling politeness has not in his pictures effaced individual asperities under uniform pleasantness. Beauty is there, but only in the cold decision of look, in the deep seriousness and sad nobility of the pale countenance, in the conscientious gravity and the indomitable resolution of the restrained gesture. In place of Lely's courtesans, we see by their side chaste ladies, sometimes severe and active; good mothers surrounded by their little children, who kiss them and embrace one another: morality is here, and with it the sentiment of home and family, propriety of dress, a pensive air, the correct deportment of Miss Burney's

¹ Lord Heathfield, the Earl of Mansfield, Major Stringer Lawrence, Lord Ashburton, Lord Edgecombe, and many others.

1911



BISHOP BUTLER

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

heroes. They are men who have done the world some service: Bakewell transforms and reforms their cattle; Arthur Young their agriculture; Howard their prisons; Arkwright and Watt their industry; Adam Smith their political economy; Bentham their penal law; Locke, Hutcheson, Ferguson, Bishop Butler, Reid, Stewart, Price, their psychology and their morality. They have purified their private manners, they now purify their public manners. They have settled their government, they have established themselves in their religion. Johnson is able to say with truth, that no nation in the world better tills its soil and its mind. There is none so rich, so free, so well nourished, where public and private efforts are directed with such assiduity, energy, and ability towards the improvement of public and private affairs. One point alone is wanting: lofty speculation. It is just this point which, when all others are wanting, constitutes at this moment the glory of France; and English caricatures show, with a good appreciation of burlesque, face to face and in strange contrast, on one side the Frenchman in a tumbledown cottage, shivering, with long teeth, thin, feeding on snails and a handful of roots, but otherwise charmed with his lot, consoled by a republican cockade and humanitarian programmes; on the other, the Englishman, red and puffed out with fat, seated at his table in a comfortable room, before a dish of most juicy roast-beef, with a pot of foaming ale, busy in grumbling against the public distress and the treacherous ministers, who are going to ruin everything.

Thus Englishmen arrive on the threshold of the French Revolution, Conservatives and Christians facing

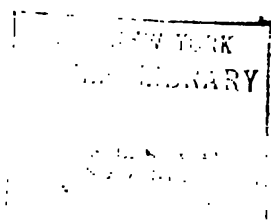
the French free-thinkers and revolutionaries. Without knowing it, the two nations have rolled onwards for two centuries towards this terrible shock; without knowing it, they have only been working to make it worse. All their effort, all their ideas, all their great men have accelerated the motion which hurls them towards the inevitable conflict. A hundred and fifty years of politeness and general ideas have persuaded the French to trust in human goodness and pure reason. A hundred and fifty years of moral reflection and political strife have attached the Englishman to positive religion and an established constitution. Each has his contrary dogma and his contrary enthusiasm. Neither understands and each detests the other. What one calls reform, the other calls destruction; what one reveres as the establishment of right, the other curses as the overthrow of right; what seems to one the annihilation of superstition, seems to the other the abolition of morality. Never was the contrast of two spirits and two civilisations shown in clearer characters, and it was Burke who, with the superiority of a thinker and the hostility of an Englishman, took it in hand to show this to the French.

He is indignant at this "tragi-comick farce," which at Paris is called the regeneration of humanity. He denies that the contagion of such folly can ever poison England. He laughs at the Cockneys, who, roused by the pratings of democratic societies, think themselves on the brink of a revolution:

"Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those

JEREMY BENTHAM





who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field ; that of course, they are many in number ; or that, after all, they are other than the little shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour.”¹

Real England hates and detests the maxims and actions of the French Revolution :²

“The very idea of the fabrication of a new government is enough to fill us with disgust and horror. We wished . . . to derive all we possess as an inheritance from our forefathers. . . . (We claim) our franchises not as the rights of men, but as the rights of Englishmen.”³

Our rights do not float in the air, in the imagination of philosophers ; they are put down in Magna Charta. We despise this abstract verbiage, which deprives man of all equity and respect to puff him up with presumption and theories :

“We have not been drawn and trussed, in order that we may be filled, like stuffed birds in a museum, with chaff and rags and paltry blurred shreds of paper about the rights of men.”⁴

Our constitution is not a fictitious contract, like that of Rousseau, sure to be violated in three months, but a real contract, by which, king, nobles, people, church, every one holds the other, and is himself held. The crown of the prince and the privilege of the noble are as sacred as the land of the peasant and the tool of the working-man. Whatever be the acquisition or the inheritance, we respect it in every man, and our law

¹ Burke's Works, v. 165 ; *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

² “I almost venture to affirm, that not one in a hundred amongst us participates in the triumph of the revolution society.”—Burke's *Reflections*, v. 165.

³ *Ibid.* 75.

⁴ *Ibid.* 166.

has but one object, which is, to preserve to each his property and his rights.

“We fear God ; we look up with awe to kings ; with affection to parliaments ; with duty to magistrates ; with reverence to priests ; and with respect to nobility.”¹

“There is not one public man in this kingdom who does not reprobate the dishonest, perfidious, and cruel confiscation which the National Assembly has been compelled to make. . . . Church and State are ideas inseparable in our minds. . . . Our education is in a manner wholly in the hands of ecclesiasticks, and in all stages, from infancy to manhood. . . . They never will suffer the fixed estate of the church to be converted into a pension, to depend on the treasury. . . . They made their church like their nobility, independent. They can see without pain or grudging an archbishop precede a duke. They can see a Bishop of Durham or a Bishop of Winchester in possession of ten thousand a year.”²

We will never suffer the established domain of our church to be converted into a pension, so as to place it in dependence on the treasury. We have made our church as our king and our nobility, independent. We are shocked at your robbery—first, because it is an outrage upon property ; next, because it is an attack upon religion. We hold that there exists no society without belief, and we feel that, in exhausting the source, you dry up the whole stream. We have rejected as a poison the infidelity which defiled the beginning of our century and of yours, and we have purged ourselves of it, whilst you have been saturated with it.

“Who, born within the last forty years, has read one word

¹ Burke's *Reflections*, v. 167.

² *Ibid.* 188.

of Collins, and Toland, and Tindal, . . . and that whole race who called themselves Freethinkers ?" ¹

"We are Protestants, not from indifference, but from zeal.

"Atheism is against not only our reason, but our instincts.

"We are resolved to keep an established church, an established monarchy, an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in the degree it exists, and in no greater." ²

We base our establishment upon the sentiment of right, and the sentiment of right on reverence for God.

In place of right and of God, whom do you, Frenchmen, acknowledge as master? The sovereign people, that is, the arbitrary inconstancy of a numerical majority. We deny that the majority has a right to destroy a constitution.

"The constitution of a country being once settled upon some compact, tacit or expressed, there is no power existing of force to alter it, without the breach of the covenant, or the consent of all the parties." ³

We deny that a majority has a right to make a constitution; unanimity must first have conferred this right on the majority. We deny that brute force is a legitimate authority, and that a populace is a nation. ⁴

"A true natural aristocracy is not a separate interest in the state or separable from it. . . . When great multitudes act together under that discipline of nature, I recognise the people;

¹ Burke's Works, v. 172; *Reflections*.

² *Ibid.* 175.

³ *Ibid.* vi. 201; *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*.

⁴ "A government of five hundred country attorneys and obscure curates is not good for twenty-four millions of men, though it were chosen by eight and forty millions. . . . As to the share of power, authority, direction, which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society."—Burke's Works, v. 100; *Reflections*.

... when you separate the common sort of men from their proper chieftains so as to form them into an adverse army, I no longer know that venerable object called the people in such a disbanded race of deserters and vagabonds."¹

We detest with all our power of hatred the right of tyranny which you give them over others, and we detest still more the right of insurrection which you give them against themselves. We believe that a constitution is a trust transmitted to this generation by the past, to be handed down to the future, and that if a generation can dispose of it as its own, it ought also to respect it as belonging to others. We hold that, "by this unprincipled facility of changing the state as often, and as much, and in as many ways as there are floating fancies and fashions, the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with the other. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer."² We repudiate this meagre and coarse reason, which separates a man from his ties, and sees in him only the present, which separates a man from society, and counts him as only one head in a flock. We despise these "metaphysics of an undergraduate and the mathematics of an exciseman," by which you cut up the state and man's rights according to square miles and numerical unities. We have a horror of that cynical coarseness by which "all the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off," by which "now a queen is but a woman, and a woman is but an animal,"³ which cuts down chivalric and religious spirit, the two crowns of humanity, to plunge them, together with learning, into the popular

¹ Burke's Works, vi. 219; *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*.

² *Ibid.* v. 181; *Reflections*.

³ *Ibid.* 151.

mire, to be "trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude."¹ We have a horror of this systematic levelling which disorganises civil society. Burke continues thus:

"I am satisfied beyond a doubt that the project of turning a great empire into a vestry, or into a collection of vestries, and of governing it in the spirit of a parochial administration, is senseless and absurd, in any mode, or with any qualifications. I can never be convinced that the scheme of placing the highest powers of the state in churchwardens and constables, and other such officers, guided by the prudence of litigious attornies, and Jew brokers, and set in action by shameless women of the lowest condition, by keepers of hotels, taverns, and brothels, by pert apprentices, by clerks, shop-boys, hairdressers, fiddlers, and dancers on the stage (who, in such a commonwealth as yours, will in future overbear, as already they have overborne, the sober incapacity of dull uninstructed men, of useful but laborious occupations), can never be put into any shape that must not be both disgraceful and destructive."² "If monarchy should ever obtain an entire ascendancy in France, it will probably be . . . the most completely arbitrary power that has ever appeared on earth. France will be wholly governed by the agitators in corporations, by societies in the towns formed of directors in assignats, . . . attornies, agents, money-jobbers, speculators, and adventurers, composing an ignoble oligarchy founded on the destruction of the crown, the church, the nobility, and the people."³

This is what Burke wrote in 1790 at the dawn of the first French Revolution.⁴ Two years after the people of

¹ Burke's Works, v. 154; *Reflections*.

² *Ibid.* vi. 5; *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*.

³ *Ibid.* v. 349; *Reflections*.

⁴ "The effect of liberty to individuals is, that they may do what they please: we ought to see what it will please them to do, before we

Birmingham destroyed the houses of some English democrats, and the miners of Wednesbury went out in a body from their pits to come to the succour of "king and church." If we compare one crusade with another, scared England was as fanatical as enthusiastic France. Pitt declared that they could not "treat with a nation of atheists."¹ Burke said that the war was not between people and people, but between property and brute force. The rage of execration, invective, and destruction mounted on both sides like a conflagration.² It was not the collision of the two governments, but of the two civilisations and the two doctrines. The two vast machines, driven with all their momentum and velocity, met face to face, not by chance, but by fatality. A whole age of

risk congratulations which may be soon turned into complaints. . . . Strange chaos of levity and ferocity, . . . monstrous tragi-comic scene. . . . After I have read the list of the persons and descriptions elected into the *Tiers-Etat*, nothing which they afterwards did could appear astonishing. . . . Of any practical experience in the state, not one man was to be found. The best were only men of theory. The majority was composed of practitioners in the law, . . . active chicaners, . . . obscure provincial advocates, stewards of petty local jurisdictions, country attorneys, notaries, etc."—Burke's *Reflections*, etc., v. 37 and 90. That which offends Burke, and even makes him very uneasy, was, that no representatives of the "natural landed interests" were among the representatives of the *Tiers-Etat*. Let us give one quotation more, for really this political clairvoyance is akin to genius: "Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites. . . . Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere; and the less of it there is within the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters."

¹ Pitt's *Speeches*, 3 vols. 1808, ii. p. 81, on negotiating for peace with France, Jan. 26, 1795. Pitt says, however, in the same speech: "God forbid that we should look on the body of the people of France as atheists."—Tr.

² *Letters to a Noble Lord; Letters on a Regicidal Peace.*

literature and philosophy had been necessary to amass the fuel which filled their sides, and laid down the rail which guided their course. In this thundering clash, amid these ebullitions of hissing and fiery vapour, in these red flames which licked the boilers, and whirled with a rumbling noise upwards to the heavens, an attentive spectator may still discover the nature and the accumulation of the force which caused such an outburst, dislocated such iron plates, and strewed the ground with such ruins.

CHAPTER IV.

Addison.

I.

IN this vast transformation of mind which occupies the whole eighteenth century, and gives England its political and moral standing, two eminent men appear in politics and morality, both accomplished writers—the most accomplished yet seen in England; both accredited mouthpieces of a party, masters in the art of persuasion and conviction; both limited in philosophy and art, incapable of considering sentiments in a disinterested fashion; always bent on seeing in things motives for approbation or blame; otherwise differing, and even in contrast with one another: one happy, benevolent, beloved; the other hated, hating, and most unfortunate: the one a partisan of liberty and the noblest hopes of man; the other an advocate of a retrograde party, and an eager detractor of humanity: the one measured, delicate, furnishing a model of the most solid English qualities, perfected by continental culture; the other unbridled and formidable, showing an example of the harshest English instincts, luxuriating without limit or rule in every kind of devastation and amid every degree of despair. To penetrate to the interior of this civilisation and this people, there are no means better than to pause and dwell upon Swift and Addison.

II.

"I have often reflected," says Steele of Addison, "after a night spent with him, apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature heightened with humour, more exquisite and delightful than any other man ever possessed."¹ And Pope, a rival of Addison, and a bitter rival, adds: "His conversation had something in it more charming than I have found in any other man."² These sayings express the whole talent of Addison: his writings are conversations, masterpieces of English urbanity and reason; nearly all the details of his character and life have contributed to nourish this urbanity and this reasoning.

At the age of seventeen we find him at Oxford, studious and peaceful, loving solitary walks under the elm-avenues, and amongst the beautiful meadows on the banks of the Cherwell. From the thorny brake of school education he chose the only flower—a withered one, doubtless, Latin verse, but one which, compared to the erudition, to the theology, to the logic of the time, is still a flower. He celebrates, in strophes or hexameters, the peace of Ryswick, or the system of Dr. Burnet; he composes little ingenious poems on a puppet-show, on the battle of the pigmies and cranes; he learns to praise and jest—in Latin it is true—but with such success, that his verses recommend him for the rewards of the ministry, and even come to the knowledge of Boileau. At the same time he imbues himself with the Latin

¹ Addison's Works, ed. Hurd, 6 vols., v. 151; Steele's Letter to Mr. Congreve.

² *Ibid.* vi. 729.

poets; he knows them by heart, even the most affected, Claudian and Prudentius; presently in Italy quotations will rain from his pen; from top to bottom, in all its nooks, and under all its aspects, his memory is stuffed with Latin verses. We see that he loves them, scans them with delight, that a fine *cæsura* charms him, that every delicacy touches him, that no hue of art or emotion escapes him, that his literary tact is refined, and prepared to relish all the beauties of thought and expression. This inclination, too long retained, is a sign of a little mind, I allow; a man ought not to spend so much time in inventing centos. Addison would have done better to enlarge his knowledge—to study Latin prose-writers, Greek literature, Christian antiquity, modern Italy, which he hardly knew. But this limited culture, leaving him weaker, made him more refined. He formed his art by studying only the monuments of Latin urbanity; he acquired a taste for the elegance and refinements, the triumphs and artifices of style; he became self-contemplative, correct, capable of knowing and perfecting his own tongue. In the designed reminiscences, the happy allusions, the discreet tone of his little poems, I find beforehand many traits of the *Spectator*.

Leaving the university, he travelled for a long time in the two most polished countries in the world, France and Italy. He lived at Paris, in the house of the ambassador, in the regular and brilliant society which gave fashion to Europe; he visited Boileau, Malebranche, saw with somewhat malicious curiosity the fine curtsies of the painted and affected ladies of Versailles, the grace and almost stale civilities of the fine speakers and fine dancers of the other sex. He was amused at

the complimentary intercourse of Frenchmen, and remarked that when a tailor accosted a shoemaker, he congratulated himself on the honour of saluting him. In Italy he admired the works of art, and praised them in a letter,¹ in which the enthusiasm is rather cold, but very well expressed.² He had the fine training which is now given to young men of the higher ranks. And it was not the amusements of Cockneys or the racket of taverns which employed him. His beloved Latin poets followed him everywhere. He had read them over before setting out; he recited their verses in the places which they mention. "I must confess, it was not one of the least entertainments that I met with in travelling, to examine these several descriptions, as it were, upon the spot, and to compare the natural face of the country with the landscapes that the poets have given us of it."³ These were the pleasures of an epicure in literature; there could be nothing more literary and less pedantic than the account which he wrote on his return.⁴ Presently this refined and delicate curiosity led him to coins. "There is a great affinity," he says, "between them and poetry;" for they serve as a commentary upon ancient authors; an effigy of the Graces makes a verse of Horace visible. And on this subject he wrote a very agreeable dialogue, choosing for personages well-bred men: "all three very well versed in the politer

¹ Addison's Works, 4 vols. 4to, Tonson, 1721, vol. i. 43. A letter to Lord Halifax (1701).

² "Renowned in verse, each shady thicket grows,
And every stream in heavenly numbers flows. . . .
Where the smooth chisel all its force has shown,
And softened into flesh the rugged stone. . . .
Here pleasing airs my ravisht soul confound
With circling notes and labyrinths of sound."—*Ibid.*

³ Preface to *Remarks on Italy* ii.

⁴ *Remarks on Italy*.

parts of learning, and had travelled into the most refined nations of Europe. . . . Their design was to pass away the heat of the summer among the fresh breezes that rise from the river (the Thames), and the agreeable mixture of shades and fountains in which the whole country naturally abounds." ¹ Then, with a gentle and well-tempered gaiety, he laughs at pedants who waste life in discussing the Latin toga or sandal, but pointed out, like a man of taste and wit, the services which coins might render to history and the arts. Was there ever a better education for a literary man of the world? He had already a long time ago acquired the art of fashionable poetry, I mean the correct verses, which are complimentary, or written to order. In all polite society we look for the adornment of thought; we desire for it rare, brilliant, beautiful dress, to distinguish it from vulgar thoughts, and for this reason we impose upon it rhyme, metre, noble expression; we keep for it a store of select terms, verified metaphors, suitable images, which are like an aristocratic wardrobe, in which it is hampered but must adorn itself. Men of wit are bound to make verses for it, and in a certain style just as others must display their lace, and that after a certain pattern. Addison put on this dress, and wore it correctly and easily, passing without difficulty from one habit to a similar one, from Latin to English verse. His principal piece, *The Campaign*,² is an excellent model of the agreeable and classical style. Each verse is full, perfect in itself, with a clever antithesis, a good epithet, or a concise picture. Countries have noble names; Italy is Ausonia, the Black Sea is the Scythian Sea; there are mountains of dead, and a

¹ *First Dialogue on Medals*, i. 435. ² On the victory of Blenheim, i. 63.

thunder of eloquence sanctioned by Lucian; pretty turns of oratorical address imitated from Ovid; cannons are mentioned in poetic periphrases, as later in Delille.¹ The poem is an official and decorative amplification, like that which Voltaire wrote afterwards on the battle of Fontenoy. Addison does yet better; he wrote an opera, a comedy, a much admired tragedy on the death of Cato. Such writing was always, in the last century, a passport to a good style and to fashionable society. A young man in Voltaire's time, on leaving college, had to write his tragedy, as now he must write an article on political economy; it was then a proof that he could converse with ladies, as now it is a proof that he can argue with men. He learned the art of being amusing, of touching the heart, of talking of love; he thus escaped from dry or special studies; he could choose among events or sentiments those which interest or please; he was able to hold his own in good society, to be sometimes agreeable there, never to offend. Such is the culture which these works gave Addison; it is of slight importance that they are poor. In them he dealt with the passions, with humour. He produced in his opera some lively and smiling pictures; in his tragedy some noble or

¹ "With floods of gore that from the vanquished fell
The marshes stagnate and the rivers swell,
Mountains of slain, etc.

Rows of hollow brass,
Tube behind tube the dreadful entrance keep,
Whilst in their wombs ten thousand thunders sleep. . . .

. . . Here shattered walls, like broken rocks, from far
Rise up in hideous views, the guilt of war;
Whilst here the vine o'er hills of ruin climbs
Industrious to conceal great Bourbon's crimes."—Vol. I. 53-52.

moving accents ; he emerged from reasoning and pure dissertation ; he acquired the art of rendering morality visible and truth expressive ; he knew how to give ideas a physiognomy, and that an attractive one. Thus was the finished writer perfected by contact with ancient and modern, foreign and national urbanity, by the sight of the fine arts, by experience of the world and study of style, by continuous and delicate choice of all that is agreeable in things and men, in life and art.

His politeness received from his character a singular bent and charm. It was not external, simply voluntary and official ; it came from the heart. He was gentle and kind, of refined sensibility, so shy even as to remain silent and seem dull in a large company or before strangers, only recovering his spirits before intimate friends, and confessing that only two persons can converse together. He could not endure an acrimonious discussion ; when his opponent was intractable, he pretended to approve, and for punishment, plunged him discreetly into his own folly. He withdrew by preference from political arguments ; being invited to deal with them in the *Spectator*, he contented himself with inoffensive and general subjects, which could interest all whilst offending none. It would have pained him to give others pain. Though a very decided and steady Whig, he continued moderate in polemics ; and in an age when the winners in the political fight were ready to ruin their opponents or to bring them to the block, he confined himself to show the faults of argument made by the Tories, or to rail courteously at their prejudices. At Dublin he went first of all to shake hands with Swift, his great and fallen adversary. Insulted bitterly by Dennis and Pope,

he refused to employ against them his influence or his wit, and praised Pope to the end. What can be more touching, when we have read his life, than his essay on kindness? we perceive that he is unconsciously speaking of himself:

“There is no society or conversation to be kept up in the world without good-nature, or something which must bear its appearance, and supply its place. For this reason mankind have been forced to invent a kind of artificial humanity, which is what we express by the word good-breeding. . . . The greatest wits I have conversed with are men eminent for their humanity. . . . Good-nature is generally born with us; health, prosperity, and kind treatment from the world are great cherishers of it where they find it.”¹

It so happens that he is involuntarily describing his own charm and his own success. It is himself that he is unveiling; he was very prosperous, and his good fortune spread itself around him in affectionate sentiments, in constant consideration for others, in calm cheerfulness. At College he was distinguished; his Latin verses made him a fellow at Oxford; he spent ten years there in grave amusements and in studies which pleased him. Dryden, the prince of literature, praised him in the highest terms, when Addison was only twenty-two. When he left Oxford, the ministry gave him a pension of three hundred pounds to finish his education, and prepare him for public service. On his return from his travels, his poem on Blenheim placed him in the first rank of the Whigs. He became twice Secretary for Ireland, Under-Secretary of State, a member of Parliament, one of the principal Secretaries of State. Party hatred spared him; amid the almost

¹ *Spectator*, No. 169.

universal defeat of the Whigs, he was re-elected member of Parliament; in the furious war of Whigs and Tories, both united to applaud his tragedy of *Cato*; the most cruel pamphleteers respected him; his uprightness, his talent, seemed exalted by common consent above discussion. He lived in abundance, activity, and honours, wisely and usefully, amid the assiduous admiration and constant affection of learned and distinguished friends, who could never have too much of his conversation, amid the applause of all the good men and all the cultivated minds of England. If twice the fall of his party seemed to destroy or retard his fortune, he maintained his position without much effort, by reflection and coolness, prepared for all that might happen, accepting mediocrity, confirmed in a natural and acquired calmness, accommodating himself without yielding to men, respectful to the great without degrading himself, free from secret revolt or internal suffering. These are the sources of his talent; could any be purer or finer? could anything be more engaging than worldly polish and elegance, without the factitious ardour and the complimentary falsehoods of the world? Where shall we look for more agreeable conversation than that of a good and happy man, whose knowledge, taste, and wit, are only employed to give us pleasure?

III.

This pleasure will be useful to us. Our interlocutor is as grave as he is polite; he will and can instruct as well as amuse us; his education has been as solid as it has been elegant; he even confesses in the *Spectator* that he prefers the serious to the humor-

ous style. He is naturally reflective, silent, attentive. He has studied literature, men, and things, with the conscientiousness of a scholar and an observer. When he travelled in Italy, it was in the English style, noting the difference of manners, the peculiarities of the soil, the good and ill effects of various governments; providing himself with precise memoirs, circumstantial statistics on taxes, buildings, minerals, climate, harbours, administration, and on a great many other things.¹ An English lord, who travels in Holland, goes simply into a cheese-shop, in order to see for himself all the stages of the manufacture; he returns, like Addison, provided with exact statistics, complete notes; this mass of verified information is the foundation of the common sense of Englishmen. Addison added to it experience of business, having been successively, or at the same time, a journalist, a member of Parliament, a statesman, hand and heart in all the fights and chances of party. Mere literary education only makes good talkers, able to adorn and publish ideas which they do not possess, and which others furnish for them. If writers wish to invent, they must look to events and men, not to books and drawing-rooms; the conversation of special men is more useful to them than the study of perfect periods; they cannot think for themselves, but in so far as they have lived or acted. Addison knew how to act and live. When we read his reports, letters, and discussions, we feel that politics and government have given him half his mind. To exercise patronage, to handle money, to interpret the law, to divine the motives of men, to foresee the changes of public opinion, to be compelled

¹ See, for instance, his chapter on the Republic of San Marino.

to judge rightly, quickly, and twenty times a day, on present and great interests, looked after by the public and under the espionage of enemies; all this nourished his reason and sustained his discourses. Such a man might judge and counsel his fellows; his judgments were not amplifications arranged by a process of the brain, but observations controlled by experience: he might be listened to on moral subjects as a natural philosopher was on subjects connected with physics; we feel that he spoke with authority, and that we were instructed.

After having listened a little, people felt themselves better; for they recognised in him from the first a singularly lofty soul, very pure, so much attached to uprightness that he made it his constant care and his dearest pleasure. He naturally loved beautiful things, goodness and justice, science and liberty. From an early age he had joined the Liberal party, and he continued in it to the end, hoping the best of human virtue and reason, noting the wretchedness into which nations fell who abandoned their dignity with their independence.¹ He followed the grand discoveries of the new physical

¹ Letter from Italy to Lord Halifax;

"O Liberty, thou Goddess heavenly bright,
Profuse of bliss, and pregnant with delight;
Eternal pleasures in thy presence reign,
And smiling plenty leads thy wanton train. . . .
'Tis liberty that crowns Britannia's isle,
And makes her barren rocks and her bleak mountains
smile."—i. 53.

About the Republic of San Marino he writes:

"Nothing can be a greater instance of the natural love that mankind has for liberty, and of their aversion to an arbitrary government, than such a savage mountain covered with people, and the Campagna of Rome, which lies in the same country, almost destitute of inhabitants."—*Remarks on Italy*, ii. 48.

sciences, so as to give him more exalted ideas of the works of God. He loved the deep and serious emotions which reveal to us the nobility of our nature and the infirmity of our condition. He employed all his talent and all his writings in giving us the notion of what we are worth, and of what we ought to be. Of two tragedies which he composed or contemplated, one was on the death of Cato, the most virtuous of the Romans; the other on that of Socrates, the most virtuous of the Greeks. At the end of the first he felt some scruples; and for fear of being accused of finding an excuse for suicide, he gave Cato some remorse. His opera of *Rosamond* ends with the injunction to prefer pure love to forbidden joys; the *Spectator*, the *Tatler*, the *Guardian*, are mere lay sermons. Moreover, he put his maxims into practice. When he was in office, his integrity was perfect; he conferred often obligations on those whom he did not know—always gratuitously, refusing presents, under whatever form they were offered. When out of office, his loyalty was perfect; he maintained his opinions and friendships without bitterness or baseness, boldly praising his fallen protectors,¹ fearing not thereby to expose himself to the loss of his only remaining resources. He possessed an innate nobility of character, and reason aided him in keeping it. He considered that there is common sense in honesty. His first care, as he said, was to range his passions on the side of truth. He had made for himself a portrait of a rational creature, and he conformed his conduct to this by reflection as much as by instinct. He rested every virtue on an order of principles and proofs. His logic fed his morality, and the uprightness of his mind

¹ *Halifax, for instance.*

completed the singleness of his heart. His religion, English in every sense, was after the like fashion. He based his faith on a regular succession of historical discussions:¹ he established the existence of God by a regular series of moral deductions; minute and solid demonstration was throughout the guide and foundation of his beliefs and emotions. Thus disposed, he loved to conceive God as the rational head of the world; he transformed accidents and necessities into calculations and directions; he saw order and providence in the conflict of things, and felt around him the wisdom which he attempted to establish in himself. Addison, good and just himself, trusted in God, also a being good and just. He lived willingly in His knowledge and presence, and thought of the unknown future which was to complete human nature and accomplish moral order. When the end came, he went over his life, and discovered that he had done some wrong or other to Gay: this wrong was doubtless slight, since Gay had never thought of it. Addison begged him to come to his bedside, and asked his pardon. When he was about to die, he wished still to be useful, and sent for his step-son, Lord Warwick, whose careless life had caused him some uneasiness. He was so weak that at first he could not speak. The young man, after waiting a while, said to him: "Dear sir, you sent for me, I believe; I hope that you have some commands; I shall hold them most sacred." The dying man with an effort pressed his hand, and replied gently: "See in what peace a Christian can die."² Shortly afterwards he expired.

¹ *Of the Christian Religion.*

² Addison's Works, Hurd, vi. 526.

IV.

"The great and only end of these speculations," says Addison, in one of his *Spectators*, "is to banish vice and ignorance out of the territories of Great Britain." And he kept his word. His papers are wholly moral—advices to families, reprimands to thoughtless women, a sketch of an honest man, remedies for the passions, reflections on God and a future life. I hardly know, or rather I know very well, what success a newspaper full of sermons would have in France. In England it was extraordinary, equal to that of the most popular modern novelists. In the general downfall of the daily and weekly papers ruined by the Stamp Act,¹ the *Spectator* doubled its price, and held its ground.² This was because it offered to Englishmen the picture of English reason: the talent and the teaching were in harmony with the needs of the age and of the country. Let us endeavour to describe this reason, which became gradually eliminated from Puritanism and its rigidity, from the Restoration and its excess. The mind attained its balance, together with religion and the state. It conceived the rule, and disciplined its conduct; it diverged from a life of excess, and confirmed itself in a sensible life; it shunned physical and prescribed moral existence. Addison rejects with scorn gross corporeal pleasure, the brutal joy of noise and motion: "I would nevertheless

¹ The Stamp Act (1712; 10 Anne, c. 19) put a duty of a halfpenny on every printed half-sheet or less, and a penny on a whole sheet, besides twelve pence on every advertisement. This Act was repealed in 1855. Swift writes to Stella (August 7, 1712), "Do you know that all Grub Street is ruined by the Stamp Act."—Ta.

² The sale of the *Spectator* was considerably diminished through its forced increase of price, and it was discontinued in 1713, the year after the Stamp Act was passed.—Ta.

leave to the consideration of those who are the patrons of this monstrous trial of skill, whether or no they are not guilty, in some measure, of an affront to their species, in treating after this manner the human face divine."¹ "Is it possible that human nature can rejoice in its disgrace, and take pleasure in seeing its own figure turned to ridicule, and distorted into forms that raise horror and aversion? There is something disingenuous and immoral in the being able to bear such a sight."² Of course he sets himself against deliberate shamelessness and the systematic debauchery which were the taste and the shame of the Restoration. He wrote whole articles against young fashionable men, "a sort of vermin" who fill London with their bastards; against professional seducers, who are the "knights-errant" of vice. "When men of rank and figure pass away their lives in these criminal pursuits and practices, they ought to consider that they render themselves more vile and despicable than any innocent man can be, whatever low station his fortune or birth have placed him in."³ He severely jeers at women who expose themselves to temptations, and whom he calls "salamanders:" "A salamander is a kind of heroine in chastity, that treads upon fire, and lives in the midst of flames without being hurt. A salamander knows no distinction of sex in those she converses with, grows familiar with a stranger at first sight, and is not so narrow-spirited as to observe whether the person she talks to be in breeches or petticoats. She admits a male visitant to her bedside, plays with him a whole afternoon at picquet, walks with him two or three hours

¹ *Spectator*, No. 173.

² *Tatler*, No. 108.

³ *Guardian*, No. 123.

by moonlight.”¹ He fights like a preacher against the fashion of low dresses, and gravely demands the tucker and modesty of olden times : “To prevent these saucy familiar glances, I would entreat my gentle readers to sew on their tuckers again, to retrieve the modesty of their characters, and not to imitate the nakedness, but the innocence, of their mother Eve. In short, modesty gives the maid greater beauty than even the bloom of youth ; it bestows on the wife the dignity of a matron, and reinstates the widow in her virginity.”² We find also lectures on masquerades which end with a rendezvous ; precepts on the number of glasses people might drink, and the dishes of which they might eat ; condemnations of licentious professors of irreligion and immorality ; all maxims now somewhat stale, but then new and useful because Wycherley and Rochester had put into practice and made popular the opposite maxima. Debauchery passed for French and fashionable : this is why Addison proscribes in addition all French frivolities. He laughs at women who receive visitors in their dressing-rooms, and speak aloud at the theatre : “There is nothing which exposes a woman to greater dangers, than that gaiety and airiness of temper, which are natural to most of the sex. It should be therefore the concern of every wise and virtuous woman to keep this sprightliness from degenerating into levity. On the contrary, the whole discourse and behaviour of the French is to make the sex more fantastical, or (as they are pleased to term it) more awakened, than is consistent either with virtue or discretion.”³ We see already in these strictures the portrait of the sensible housewife,

¹ *Spectator*, No. 198.

² *Guardian*, No. 100.

³ *Spectator*, No. 45.

the modest English woman, domestic and grave, wholly taken up with her husband and children. Addison returns a score of times to the artifices, the pretty affected babyisms, the coquetry, the futilities of women. He cannot suffer languishing or lazy habits. He is full of epigrams against flirtations, extravagant toilets, useless visits.¹ He writes a satirical journal of a man who goes to his club, learns the news, yawns, studies the barometer, and thinks his time well occupied. He considers that time is capital, business duty, and life a task.

Is life only a task? If Addison holds himself superior to sensual life, he falls short of philosophical life. His morality, thoroughly English, always drags along among commonplaces, discovering no principles, making no deductions. The fine and lofty aspects of the mind are wanting. He gives useful advice, clear instruction, justified by what happened yesterday, useful for to-morrow. He observes that fathers must not be inflexible, and that they often repent driving their children to despair. He finds that bad books are pernicious, because their durability carries their poison to future ages. He consoles a woman who has lost her sweetheart, by showing her the misfortunes of so many other people who are suffering the greatest evils at the same time. His *Spectator* is only an honest man's manual, and is often like the *Complete Lawyer*. It is practical, its aim being not to amuse, but to correct us. The conscientious Protestant, nourished with dissertations and morality, demands an effective monitor and guide; he would like his reading to influence his conduct, and his newspaper to suggest a

¹ *Spectator*, Nos. 317 and 323.

resolution. To this end Addison seeks motives everywhere. He thinks of the future life, but does not forget the present; he rests virtue on interest rightly understood. He strains no principle to its limits; he accepts them all, as they are to be met with everywhere, according to their manifest goodness, drawing from them only the primary consequences, shunning the powerful logical pressure which spoils all by expressing too much. Let us observe him establishing a maxim, recommending constancy for instance; his motives are mixed and incongruous: first, inconstancy exposes us to scorn: next, it puts us in continual distraction; again, it hinders us as a rule from attaining our end; moreover, it is the great feature of a human and mortal being; finally, it is most opposed to the inflexible nature of God, who ought to be our model. The whole is illustrated at the close by a quotation from Dryden and a verse from Horace. This medley and jumble describe the ordinary mind which remains on the level of its audience, and the practical mind, which knows how to dominate over its audience. Addison persuades the public, because he draws from the public sources of belief. He is powerful because he is vulgar, and useful because he is narrow.

Let us picture now this mind, so characteristically mediocre, limited to the discovery of good motives of action. What a reflective man, always calm and dignified! What a store he has of resolutions and maxims! All rapture, instinct, inspiration, and caprice, are abolished or disciplined. No case surprises or carries him away. He is always ready and protected; so much so, that he is like an automaton. Argument has frozen and invaded him. Consider, for

instance, how he puts us on our guard against involuntary hypocrisy, announcing, explaining, distinguishing the ordinary and extraordinary modes, dragging on with exordiums, preparations, methods, allusions to Scripture.¹ After having read six lines of this morality, a Frenchman would go out for a mouthful of fresh air. What in the name of heaven would he do, if, in order to move him to piety, he was told² that God's omniscience and omnipresence furnished us with three kinds of motives, and then subdivided these motives into first, second, and third? To put calculation at every stage; to come with weights, scales, and figures, into the thick of human passions, to label them, classify them like bales, to tell the public that the inventory is complete; to lead them, with the reckoning in their hand, and by the mere virtue of statistics, to honour and duty,—such is the morality of Addison and of England. It is a sort of commercial common sense applied to the interests of the soul; a preacher here is only an economist in a white tie, who treats conscience like food, and refutes vice because its introduction is prohibited.

There is nothing sublime or chimerical in the end which he sets before us; all is practical, that is, business-like and sensible; the question is, how "to be easy here and happy afterwards." To be easy is a word which has no French equivalent, meaning that comfortable state of the mind, a middle state between calm satisfaction, approved action and serene conscience. Addison makes it consist in labour and manly functions, carefully and regularly discharged. We must see with what complacency he paints in the *Freeholder*

¹ *Spectator*, No. 399.

² *Ibid.* No. 571.

and "Sir Roger" the grave pleasures of a citizen and proprietor :

"I have rather chosen this title (the Freeholder) than any other, because it is what I most glory in, and what most effectually calls to my mind the happiness of that government under which I live. As a British freeholder, I should not scruple taking place of a French marquis ; and when I see one of my countrymen amusing himself in his little cabbago-garden, I naturally look upon him as a greater person than the owner of the richest vineyard in Champagne. . . . There is an unspeakable pleasure in calling anything one's own. A freehold, though it be but in ice and snow, will make the owner pleased in the possession, and stout in the defence of it. . . . I consider myself as one who give my consent to every law which passes. . . . A freeholder is but one remove from a legislator, and for that reason ought to stand up in the defence of those laws which are in some degree of his own making."¹

These are all English feelings, made up of calculation and pride, energetic and austere ; and this portrait is capped by that of the married man :

"Nothing is more gratifying to the mind of man than power or dominion ; and this I think myself amply possessed of, as I am the father of a family. I am perpetually taken up in giving out orders, in prescribing duties, in hearing parties, in administering justice, and in distributing rewards and punishments. . . . I look upon my family as a patriarchal sovereignty, in which I am myself both king and priest. . . . When I see my little troop before me, I rejoice in the additions which I have made to my species, to my country, and to my religion, in having produced such a number of reasonable creatures, citizens, and Christians. I am pleased to see myself thus perpetuated ; and as there is no production comparable to that of a human

creature, I am more proud of having been the occasion of ten such glorious productions, than if I had built a hundred pyramids at my own expense, or published as many volumes of the finest wit and learning."¹

If now we take the man away from his estate and his household, alone with himself, in moments of idleness or reverie, we will find him just as positive. He observes, that he may cultivate his own reasoning power, and that of others; he stores himself with morality; he wishes to make the most of himself and of existence, that is the reason why he thinks of death. The northern races willingly direct their thoughts to final dissolution and the dark future. Addison often chose for his promenade gloomy Westminster Abbey, with its many tombs: "Upon my going into the church I entertained myself with the digging of a grave; and saw in every shovel-full of it that was thrown up the fragment of a bone or skull intermixt with a kind of fresh mouldering earth that some time or other had a place in the composition of a human body. . . . I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together."² And suddenly his emotion is transformed into profitable meditations. Underneath his morality is a pair of scales which weigh quantities of happiness. He stirs himself by mathematical comparisons to prefer the future to the present. He tries to realise, amidst an assemblage of dates, the disproportion of our short life to infinity. Thus arises this religion, a product of melancholic temperament and acquired logic, in which man, a sort of calculating Hamlet, aspires to the ideal

¹ *Spectator*, No. 500.

² *Ibid.* Nos. 26 and 575.

by making a good business of it, and maintains his poetical sentiments by financial calculations.

In such a subject these habits are offensive. We ought not to try and over-define or prove God; religion is rather a matter of feeling than of science; we compromise it by exacting too rigorous demonstrations, and too precise dogmas. It is the heart which sees heaven; if a man would make me believe in it, as he makes me believe in the Antipodes, by geographical accounts and probabilities, I shall barely or not at all believe. Addison has little more than his college or edifying arguments, very like those of the abbé Pluche,¹ which let in objections at every chink, and which we can only regard as dialectical essays, or sources of emotion. When we add to these arguments, motives of interest and calculations of prudence, which can make recruits, but not converts, we possess all his proofs. There is an element of coarseness in this fashion of treating divine things, and we like still less the exactness with which he explains God, reducing him to a mere magnified man. This preciseness and this narrowness go so far as to describe heaven :

“ Though the Deity be thus essentially present through all the immensity of space, there is one part of it in which he discovers himself in a most transcendent and visible glory. . . . It is here where the glorified body of our Saviour resides, and where all the celestial hierarchies, and the innumerable hosts of angels, are represented as perpetually surrounding the seat of God with hallelujahs and hymns of praise. . . . With how much skill must the throne of God be erected ! . . . How great must be the majesty of that place, where the whole art of

¹ The abbé Pluche (1688-1761) was the author of a *Système de la Nature* and several other works.—Tr.

creation has been employed, and where God has chosen to shew himself in the most magnificent manner! What must be the architecture of infinite power under the direction of infinite wisdom?"¹

Moreover, the place must be very grand, and they have music there: it is a noble palace; perhaps there are antechambers. We had better not continue the quotation. The same dull and literal precision makes him inquire what sort of happiness the elect have.² They will be admitted into the councils of Providence, and will understand all its proceedings: "There is, doubtless, a faculty in spirits by which they apprehend one another as our senses do material objects; and there is no question but our souls, when they are disembodied, or placed in glorified bodies, will by this faculty, in whatever part of space they reside, be always sensible of the Divine Presence."³ This grovelling philosophy repels us. One word of Addison will justify it, and make us understand it: "The business of mankind in this life is rather to act than to know." Now, such a philosophy is as useful in action as poor in science. All its faults of speculation become merits in practice. It follows in a prosy manner positive religion.⁴ What support does it not attain from the authority of an ancient tradition, a national institution, an established priesthood, outward ceremonies, every-day customs! It employs as arguments public utility, the example of great minds, heavy logic, literal interpretation, and un-mistakeable texts. What better means of governing the crowd, than to degrade proofs to the vulgarity of its intelligence and needs? It humanises the Divinity:

¹ *Spectator*, No. 580; see also No. 531. ² *Ibid.* Nos. 237, 571, 600.

³ *Ibid.* No. 571; see also Nos. 237, 600. ⁴ *Tatler*, No. 257.

is it not the only way to make men understand Him? It defines almost obviously a future life: is it not the only way to cause it to be wished for? The poetry of lofty philosophical deductions is weak compared to the inner persuasion, rooted by so many positive and detailed descriptions. In this way an active piety is born; and religion thus constructed doubles the force of the moral spring. Addison's is admirable, because it is so strong. Energy of feeling rescues wretchedness of dogma. Beneath his dissertations we feel that he is moved, minutiae, pedantry disappear. We see in him now only a soul deeply penetrated with adoration and respect; no more a preacher classifying God's attributes, and pursuing his trade as a good logician; but a man who naturally, and of his own bent, returns to a lofty spectacle, goes with awe into all its aspects, and leaves it only with a renewed or overwhelmed heart. The sincerity of his emotions makes us respect even his catechetical prescriptions. He demands fixed days of devotion and meditation to recall us regularly to the thought of our Creator and of our faith. He inserts prayers in his paper. He forbids oaths, and recommends to keep always before us the idea of a sovereign Master:

"Such an habitual homage to the Supreme Being would, in a particular manner, banish from among us that prevailing impiety of using his name on the most trivial occasions. . . . What can we then think of those who make use of so tremendous a name in the ordinary expressions of their anger, mirth, and most impertinent passions? of those who admit it into the most familiar questions, and assertions, ludicrous phrases, and works of humour? not to mention those who violate it by solemn perjuries! It would be an affront to reason to en-

deavour to set forth the horror and profaneness of such a practice."¹

If a Frenchman was forbidden to swear, he would probably laugh at the first word of the admonition; in his eyes that is a matter of good taste, not of morality. But if he had heard Addison himself pronouncing what I have written, he would laugh no longer.

V.

It is no small thing to make morality fashionable. Addison did it, and it remained in fashion. Formerly honest men were not polished, and polished men were not honest; piety was fanatical, and urbanity depraved; in manners, as in literature, a man could meet only Puritans or libertines. For the first time Addison reconciled virtue with elegance, taught duty in an accomplished style, and made pleasure subservient to reason:

"It was said of Socrates that he brought Philosophy down from heaven, to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses. I would therefore, in a very particular manner, recommend these my speculations to all well-regulated families, and set apart an hour in every morning for tea and bread and butter; and would earnestly advise them for their good to order this paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a part of the tea-equipage."²

In this passage we may detect an inclination to smile, a little irony tempers the serious idea; it is the tone of a polished man, who, at the first sign of ennui, turns

¹ *Spectator*, No. 531.

² *Ibid.* No. 10.

round, delicately laughs, even at himself, and tries to please. It is Addison's general tone.

What an amount of art is necessary to please ! First, the art of making oneself understood, at once, always, completely, without difficulty to the reader, without reflection, without attention. Let us figure to ourselves men of the world reading a page between two mouthfuls of "bohea-rolls," ladies interrupting a phrase to ask when the ball begins : three technical or learned words would make them throw the paper down. They only desire distinct terms, in common use, into which wit enters all at once, as it enters ordinary converse ; in fact, for them reading is only a conversation, and a better one than usual. For the select world refines language. It does not suffer the risks and approximations of extempore and inexperienced speaking. It requires a knowledge of style, like a knowledge of external forms. It will have exact words to express the fine shades of thought, and measured words to preclude offensive or extreme impressions. It wishes for developed phrases, which, presenting the same idea, under several aspects, impress it easily upon its desultory mind. It demands harmonies of words, which, presenting a known idea in a smart form, may introduce it in a lively manner to its desultory imagination. Addison gives it all that it desires ; his writings are the pure source of classical style ; men never spoke better in England. Ornaments abound, and never has rhetoric a share in them. Throughout we have precise contrasts, which serve only for clearness, and are not too prolonged ; happy expressions, easily hit on, which give things a new and ingenious turn ; harmonious periods, in which the sounds flow into one another with the diversity and

sweetness of a quiet stream; a fertile vein of invention and fancy, through which runs the most amiable irony. We trust one example will suffice:

"He is not obliged to attend her (Nature) in the slow advances which she makes from one season to another, or to observe her conduct in the successive production of plants and flowers. He may draw into his description all the beauties of the spring and autumn, and make the whole year contribute something to render it the more agreeable. His rose-trees, woodbines, and jessamines may flower together, and his beds be covered at the same time with lilies, violets, and amaranths. His soil is not restrained to any particular set of plants, but is proper either for oaks or myrtles, and adapts itself to the products of every climate. Oranges may grow wild in it; myrrh may be met with in every hedge; and if he thinks it proper to have a grove of spices, he can quickly command sun enough to raise it. If all this will not furnish out an agreeable scene, he can make several new species of flowers, with richer scents and higher colours, than any that grow in the gardens of nature. His concerts of birds may be as full and harmonious, and his woods as thick and gloomy as he pleases. He is at no more expense in a long vista than a short one, and can as easily throw his cascades from a precipice of half a mile high as from one of twenty yards. He has his choice of the winds, and can turn the course of his rivers in all the variety of meanders that are most delightful to the reader's imagination."¹

I find here that Addison profits by the rights which he grants to others, and is amused in explaining to us how we may amuse ourselves. Such is the charming tone of society. Reading the *Spectator*, we fancy it still more amiable than it is: no pretension; no efforts; endless contrivances employed unconsciously, and obtained with-

¹ *Spectator*, No. 418.

out asking; the gift of being lively and agreeable; a refined banter, raillery without bitterness, a sustained gaiety; the art of finding in everything the most blooming and the freshest flower, and to smell it without bruising or sullyng it; science, politics, experience, morality, bringing their finest fruits, adorning them, offering them at a chosen moment, ready to withdraw them as soon as conversation has enjoyed them, and before it is tired of them; ladies placed in the first rank,¹ arbiters of refinement, surrounded with homage, crowning the politeness of men and the brilliancy of society by the attraction of their toilettes, the delicacy of their wit, and the charm of their smiles;—such is the familiar spectacle in which the writer has formed and delighted himself.

So many advantages are not without their inconvenience. The compliments of society, which attenuate expressions, blunt the style; by regulating what is instinctive and moderating what is vehement, they make speech threadbare and uniform. We must not always seek to please, above all, to please the ear. Monsieur de Chateaubriand boasted of not admitting a single elision into the song of *Cymodocée*; so much the worse for *Cymodocée*. So the commentators who have noted in Addison the balance of his periods, do him an injustice.² They explain thus why he slightly wearies us. The rotundity of his phrases is a scanty merit and mars the rest. To calculate longs and shorts, to be always thinking of sounds, of final cadences,—all these classical researches

¹ *Spectator*, Nos. 423, 265.

² See, in the notes of No. 409 of the *Spectator*, the pretty minute analysis of Hurd, the decomposition of the period, the proportion of long and short syllables, the study of the finals. A musician could not have done better.

spoil a writer. Every idea has its accent, and all our labour ought to be to put it down free and simple on paper, as it is in our mind. We ought to copy and mark our thought with the flow of emotions and images, which raise it, caring for nothing but its exactness and clearness. One true phrase is worth a hundred periods: the first is a document which fixes for ever a movement of the heart or the senses; the other is a toy to amuse the empty heads of verse-makers. I would give twenty pages of Fléchier for three lines of Saint-Simon. Regular rhythm mutilates the impetus of natural invention; the shades of inner vision vanish; we see no more a soul which thinks or feels, but fingers which count measures whilst scanning. The continuous period is like the shears of La Quintinie,¹ which clip all the trees round under pretence of beautifying. This is why there is some coldness and monotony in Addison's style. He seems to be listening to himself. He is too measured and correct. His most touching stories, like that of *Theodosius and Constantia*, touch us only partially. Who could feel inclined to weep over such periods as these?

"Constantia, who knew that nothing but the report of her marriage could have driven him to such extremities, was not to be comforted: she now accused herself for having so tamely given an ear to the proposal of a husband, and looked upon the new lover as the murderer of Theodosius: in short, she resolved to suffer the utmost effects of her father's displeasure, rather than to comply with a marriage which appeared to her so full of guilt and horror."²

¹ La Quintinie (1626-1688) a celebrated gardener under Louis XIV., planned the gardens of Versailles.—Tn.

² *Spectator* No. 164.

Is this the way to paint horror and guilt? Where are the passionate emotions which Addison pretends to paint? The story is related, not seen.

The classical writer simply cannot see. Always measured and rational, his first care is to proportion and arrange. He has his rules in his pocket, and brings them out for everything. He does not rise to the source of the beautiful at once, like genuine artists, by force and lucidity of natural inspiration; he lingers in the middle regions, amid precepts, subject to taste and common sense. This is why Addison's criticism is so solid and so poor. They who seek ideas will do well not to read his *Essays on Imagination*,¹ so much praised, so well written, but so scant of philosophy, and so commonplace, dragged down by the intervention of final causes. His celebrated commentary on *Paradise Lost* is little better than the dissertations of Batteux and Bossu. In one place he compares, almost in a line, Homer, Virgil, and Ovid. The fine arrangement of a poem is with him the highest merit. The pure classics enjoy better arrangement and good order than artless truth and strong originality. They have always their poetic manual in their hands: if we agree with the pre-arranged pattern, we have genius; if not, we have none. Addison, in praise of Milton, establishes that, according to the rule of epic poetry, the action of *Paradise Lost* is one, complete and great; that its characters are varied and of universal interest, and its sentiments natural, appropriate, and elevated; the style clear, diversified, and sublime. Now we may admire Milton; he has a testimonial from Aristotle. Listen, for instance, to cold details of classical dissertation:

¹ See *Spectator*, Nos. 411-421.

"Had I followed Monsieur Boasu's method in my first paper on Milton, I should have dated the action of *Paradise Lost* from the beginning of Raphael's speech in this book."¹

"But, notwithstanding the fineness of this allegory (Sin and Death) may atone for it (the defect in the subject of his poem) in some measure, I cannot think that persons of such a chimerical existence are proper actors in an epic poem."²

Further on Addison defines poetical machines, the conditions of their structure, the advantage of their use. He seems to me a carpenter inspecting a staircase. Do not suppose that artificiality shocks him; on the contrary, he rather admires it. He finds the violent declamations of the Miltonic divinity and the royal compliments indulged in by the persons of the Trinity, sublime. The camps of the angels, their bearing in chapel and barrack, their scholastic disputes, their bitter puritanical or pious royalistic style, do not strike him as false or disagreeable. Adam's pedantry and household lectures appear to him suitable to the state of innocence. In fact, the classics of the last two centuries never looked upon the human mind, except in its cultivated state. The child, the artist, the barbarian, the inspired man, escaped them; so, of course, did all who were beyond humanity: their world was limited to the earth, and to the earth of the study and drawing-rooms; they rose neither to God nor nature, or if they did, it was to transform nature into a well-regulated garden-plot, and God into a moral scrutator. They reduced genius to eloquence, poetry to discourse, the drama to a dialogue. They regarded reason as if it were beauty, a sort of middle faculty, not apt for invention, potent in rules, balancing imagination like conduct, and making

¹ *Spectator*, No. 327.

² *Ibid.* No. 273.

taste the arbiter of letters, as it made morality the arbiter of actions. They dispensed with the play on words, the sensual grossness, the flights of imagination, the unlikelihood, the atrocities, and all the bad accompaniments of Shakspeare;¹ but they only half followed him in the deep intuitions by which he pierced the human heart, and discovered therein the god and the animal. They wanted to be moved, but not overwhelmed; they allowed themselves to be impressed, but demanded to be pleased. To please rationally was the object of their literature. Such is Addison's criticism, which resembles his art; born, like his art, of classical urbanity; fit, like his art, for the life of the world, having the same solidity and the same limits, because it had the same sources, namely order and relaxation.

VI.

But we must consider that we are in England, and that we find there many things not agreeable to a Frenchman. In France, the classical age attained perfection; so that, compared to it, other countries lack somewhat of finish. Addison, elegant in his own native country, is not quite so in France. Compared with Tillotson, he is the most charming man possible; compared to Montesquieu, he is only half polished. His converse is hardly sparkling enough; the quick movement, the easy change of tone, the facile smile, readily dropt and readily resumed, are hardly visible. He drags on in long and too uniform phrases; his periods are too square; we might cull a load of useless words. He tells us what he is going to say: he marks divisions and subdi-

¹ *Spectator*, Nos. 39, 40, 58.

visions; he quotes Latin, even Greek; he displays and protracts without end the serviceable and sticky plaster of his morality. He has no fear of being wearisome. That is not what Englishmen fear. Men who love demonstrative sermons three hours long are not difficult to amuse. Remember that here the women like to go to meeting, and are entertained by listening for half a day to discourses on drunkenness, or on the sliding scale for taxes: these patient creatures do not require that conversation should be always lively and piquant. Consequently they can put up with a less refined politeness and less disguised compliments. When Addison bows to them, which happens often, it is gravely, and his reverence is always accompanied by a warning. Take the following on their gaudy dresses:

"I looked with as much pleasure upon this little party-coloured assembly, as upon a bed of tulips, and did not know at first whether it might not be an embassy of Indian queens; but upon my going about into the pit, and taking them in front, I was immediately undeceived and saw so much beauty in every face, that I found them all to be English. Such eyes and lips, cheeks and foreheads, could be the growth of no other country. The complexion of their faces hindered me from observing any further the colour of their hoods, though I could easily perceive, by that unspeakable satisfaction which appeared in their looks, that their own thoughts were wholly taken up on those pretty ornaments they wore upon their heads."¹

In this discreet raillery, modified by an almost official admiration, we perceive the English mode of treating women: man, by her side, is always a lay-preacher;

¹ *Spectator*, No. 265.

they are for him charming children, or useful housewives, never queens of the drawing-room, or equals, as amongst the French. When Addison wishes to bring back the Jacobite ladies to the Protestant party, he treats them almost like little girls, to whom we promise, if they will be good, to restore their doll or their cake :

“ They should first reflect on the great sufferings and persecutions to which they expose themselves by the obstinacy of their behaviour. They lose their elections in every club where they are set up for toasts. They are obliged by their principles to stick a patch on the most unbecoming side of their foreheads. They forego the advantage of birthday suits. . . . They receive no benefit from the army, and are never the better for all the young fellows that wear hats and feathers. They are forced to live in the country and feed their chickens ; at the same time that they might show themselves at court, and appear in brocade, if they behaved themselves well. In short, what must go to the heart of every fine woman, they throw themselves quite out of the fashion. . . . A man is startled when he sees a pretty bosom heaving with such party-rage, as is disagreeable even in that sex which is of a more coarse and rugged make. And yet such is our misfortune, that we sometimes see a pair of stays ready to burst with sedition ; and hear the most masculine passions expressed in the sweetest voices. . . . Where a great number of flowers grow, the ground at distance seems entirely covered with them, and we must walk into it before we can distinguish the several weeds that spring up in such a beautiful mass of colours.”¹

This gallantry is too deliberate ; we are somewhat shocked to see a woman touched by such thoughtful hands. It is the urbanity of a moralist ; albeit he is well-bred, he is not quite amiable ; and if a Frenchman

¹ *Freeholder*, No. 26.

can receive from him lessons of pedagogy and conduct, Addison might come over to France to find models of manners and conversation.

If the first care of a Frenchman in society is to be amiable, that of an Englishman is to be dignified; their mood leads them to immobility, as ours to gestures; and their pleasantry is as grave as ours is gay. Laughter with them is inward; they shun giving themselves up to it; they are amused silently. Let us make up our mind to understand this kind of temper, it will end by pleasing us. When phlegm is united to gentleness, as in Addison, it is as agreeable as it is piquant. We are charmed to meet a lively man, who is yet master of himself. We are astonished to see these contrary qualities together. Each heightens and modifies the other. We are not repelled by venomous bitterness, as in Swift, or by continuous buffoonery, as in Voltaire. We enjoy altogether the rare union, which for the first time combines serious bearing and good humour. Read this little satire against the bad taste of the stage and the public.

“There is nothing that of late years has afforded matter of greater amusement to the town than Signor Nicolini's combat with a lion in the Haymarket, which has been very often exhibited to the general satisfaction of most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom of Great Britain. . . . The first lion was a candle-snuffer, who being a fellow of a testy, choleric temper, overdid his part, and would not suffer himself to be killed so easily as he ought to have done. . . . The second lion was a tailor by trade, who belonged to the playhouse, and had the character of a mild and peaceable man in his profession. If the former was too furious, this was too sheepish for his part; insomuch that, after a short modest walk upon the stage, he

would fall at the first touch of Hydaspes, without grappling with him, and giving him an opportunity of shewing his variety of Italian trips. It is said, indeed, that he once gave him a rip in his flesh-coloured doublet ; but this was only to make work for himself, in his private character of a tailor. . . . The acting lion at present is as I am informed, a country gentleman, who does it for his diversion, but desires his name may be concealed. He says, very handsomely, in his own excuse, that he does not act for gain, that he indulges an innocent pleasure in it ; and that it is better to pass away an evening in this manner than in gaming and drinking. . . . This gentleman's temper is made out of such a happy mixture of the mild and the choleric, that he outdoes both his predecessors, and has drawn together greater audiences than have been known in the memory of man. . . . In the meantime I have related this combat of the lion, to show what are at present the reigning entertainments of the politer part of Great Britain.¹"

There is much originality in this grave gaiety. As a rule, singularity is in accordance with the taste of the nation ; they like to be impressed strongly by contrasts. French literature seems to them threadbare ; and the French find them often not very delicate. A number of the *Spectator* which seemed pleasant to London ladies would have shocked people in Paris. Thus, Addison relates in the form of a dream the dissection of a beau's brain :

"The pineal gland, which many of our modern philosophers suppose to be the seat of the soul, smelt very strong of essence and orange-flower water, and was encompassed with a kind of horny substance, cut into a thousand little faces or mirrors, which were imperceptible to the naked eye ; insomuch that the soul, if there had been any here, must have been always taken up in contemplating her own beauties. We observed a large

¹ *Spectator*, No. 13.

antrum or cavity in the sinciput, that was filled with ribbons, lace, and embroidery. . . . We did not find anything very remarkable in the eye, saving only, that the *musculi amatorii*, or, as we may translate it into English, the ogling muscles, were very much worn, and decayed with use ; whereas on the contrary, the elevator, or the muscle which turns the eye towards heaven, did not appear to have been used at all.”¹

These anatomical details, which would disgust the French, amuse a matter-of-fact mind ; harshness is for him only accuracy ; accustomed to precise images, he finds no objectionable odour in the medical style. Addison does not share our repugnance. To rail at a vice, he becomes a mathematician, an economist, a pedant, an apothecary. Technical terms amuse him. He sets up a court to judge crinolines, and condemns petticoats in legal formulas. He teaches how to handle a fan as if he were teaching to prime and load muskets. He draws up a list of men dead or injured by love, and the ridiculous causes which have reduced them to such a condition :

“ Will Simple, smitten at the Opera by the glance of an eye that was aimed at one who stood by him.

“ Sir Christopher Crazy, Bart., hurt by the brush of a whale-bone petticoat.

“ Ned Courtly, presenting Flavia with her glove (which she had dropped on purpose), she received it and took away his life with a curtesy.

“ John Gosselin, having received a slight hurt from a pair of blue eyes, as he was making his escape, was dispatched by a smile.”²

Other statistics, with recapitulations and tables of numbers, relate the history of the Leucadian leap :

¹ *Spectator*, No. 275.

² *Ibid.* No. 377.

"Aridæus, a beautiful youth of Epirus, in love with Praxinoë, the wife of the Thespis, escaped without damage, saving only that two of his foreteeth were struck out, and his nose a little flatted.

"Hipparchus, being passionately fond of his own wife, who was enamoured of Bathyllus, leaped and died of his fall; upon which his wife married her gallant."¹

We see this strange mode of painting human folly: in England it is called humour. It consists of an incisive good sense, the habit of restraint, business habits, but above all a fundamental energy of invention. The race is less refined, but stronger than the French; and the pleasures which content its mind and taste are like the liquors which suit its palate and its stomach.

This potent Germanic spirit breaks out even in Addison through his classical and Latin exterior. Albeit he relishes art, he still loves nature. His education, which loaded him with maxims, has not destroyed his virgin sentiment of truth. In his travels in France he preferred the wildness of Fontainebleau to the correctness of Versailles. He shakes off worldly refinement to praise the simplicity of the old national ballads. He explains to his public the sublime images, the vast passions, the deep religion of *Paradise Lost*. It is curious to see him, compass in hand, kept back by Bossu, fettered in endless arguments and academical phrases, attaining with one spring, through the strength of natural emotion, the lofty unexplored regions to which Milton rose by the inspiration of faith and genius. Addison does not say, as Voltaire does, that the allegory of Sin and Death is enough to make people sick. He has a foundation of grand imagination, which makes him

¹ *Spectator*, No. 233.

indifferent to the little refinements of social civilisation. He sojourns willingly amid the grandeur and marvels of the other world. He is penetrated by the presence of the Invisible, he must escape from the interests and hopes of the petty life in which we crawl.¹ This source of faith gushes from him in all directions; in vain is it enclosed in the regular channel of official dogma; the text and arguments with which it is covered do not hide its true origin. It springs from the grave and fertile imagination which can only be satisfied with a sight of what is beyond.

Such a faculty swallows a man up; and if we descend to the examination of literary qualities, we find it at the bottom as well as at the top. Nothing in Addison is more varied and rich than the changes and the scenery. The driest morality is transformed under his hand into pictures and stories. There are letters from all kinds of men, clergymen, common people, men of fashion, who keep their own style, and disguise their advice under the form of a little novel. An ambassador from Bantam jests, like Montesquieu, at the lies of European politeness. Greek or Oriental tales, imaginary travels, the vision of a Scottish seer, the memoirs of a rebel, the history of ants, the transformations of an ape, the journal of an idle man, a walk in Westminster, the genealogy of humour, the laws of ridiculous clubs; in short, an inexhaustible mass of pleasant or solid fictions. The allegories are most frequent. We feel that the author delights in this magnificent and fantastic world; he is acting for himself a sort of opera; his eyes must look on colours. Here is a paper on religions, very Protestant, but as

¹ See the last thirty numbers of the *Spectator*.

sparkling as it is ingenious: relaxation in England does not consist, as in France, in the vivacity and variety of tone, but in the splendour and correctness of invention:

“The middle figure, which immediately attracted the eyes of the whole company, and was much bigger than the rest, was formed like a matron, dressed in the habit of an elderly woman of quality in Queen Elizabeth’s days. The most remarkable parts of her dress were the beaver with the steeple crown, the scarf that was darker than sable, and the lawn apron that was whiter than ermine. Her gown was of the richest black velvet, and just upon her heart studded with large diamonds of an inestimable value, disposed in the form of a cross. She bore an inexpressible cheerfulness and dignity in her aspect; and though she seemed in years, appeared with so much spirit and vivacity, as gave her at the same time an air of old age and immortality. I found my heart touched with so much love and reverence at the sight of her, that the tears ran down my face as I looked upon her; and still the more I looked upon her, the more my heart was melted with the sentiments of filial tenderness and duty. I discovered every moment something so charming in this figure, that I could scarce take my eyes off it. On its right hand there sat the figure of a woman so covered with ornaments, that her face, her body, and her hands were almost entirely hid under them. The little you could see of her face was painted, and what I thought very odd, had something in it like artificial wrinkles; but I was the less surprised at it, when I saw upon her forehead an old-fashioned tower of grey hairs. Her head-dress rose very high by three several stories or degrees; her garments had a thousand colours in them, and were embroidered with crosses in gold, silver, and silk; she had nothing on, so much as a glove or a slipper, which was not marked with this figure; nay, so superstitiously fond did she appear of it, that she sat cross-legged. . . . The next to her was a figure which somewhat puzzled me; it was

that of a man looking with horror in his eyes, upon a silver basin filled with water. Observing something in his countenance that looked like lunacy, I fancied at first that he was to express that kind of distraction which the physicians call the Hydrophobia ; but considering what the intention of the show was, I immediately recollected myself, and concluded it to be Anabaptism."¹

The reader must guess what these two first figures mean. They will please a member of the Episcopal Church more than a Roman Catholic ; but I think that a Roman Catholic himself cannot help recognising the fulness and freshness of the fiction.

Genuine imagination naturally ends in the invention of characters. For, if we clearly represent to ourselves a situation or an action, we will see at the same time the whole network of its connection ; the passion and faculties, all the gestures and tones of voice, all details of dress, dwelling, social intercourse, which flow from it, will be connected in our mind, and bring their precedents and their consequences ; and this multitude of ideas, slowly organised, will at last be concentrated in a single sentiment, from which, as from a deep spring, will break forth the portrait and the history of a complete character. There are several such in Addison ; the quiet observer Will Honeycomb, the country Tory Sir Roger de Coverley, which are not satirical theses, like those of La Bruyère, but genuine individuals, like, and sometimes equal to, the characters of the great contemporary novels. In reality, he invents the novel without suspecting it, at the same time and in the same way as his most illustrious neighbours. His characters are taken from life, from the manners and

¹ *Tatler*, No. 257.

conditions of the age, described at length and minutely in all the details of their education and surroundings, with a precise and positive observation, marvellously real and English. A masterpiece as well as an historical record is Sir Roger de Coverley, the country gentleman, a loyal servant of State and Church, a justice of the peace, with a chaplain of his own, and whose estate shows on a small scale the structure of the English nation. This domain is a little kingdom, paternally governed, but still governed. Sir Roger rates his tenants, passes them in review in church, knows their affairs, gives them advice, assistance, commands; he is respected, obeyed, loved, because he lives with them, because the simplicity of his tastes and education puts him almost on a level with them; because as a magistrate, a landed proprietor of many years standing, a wealthy man, a benefactor and neighbour, he exercises a moral and legal, a useful and respected authority. Addison at the same time shows in him the solid and peculiar English character, built of heart of oak, with all the ruggedness of the primitive bark, which can neither be softened nor planed down, a great fund of kindness which extends even to animals, a love for the country and for bodily exercises, an inclination to command and discipline, a feeling of subordination and respect, much common sense and little finesse, a habit of displaying and practising in public his singularities and oddities, careless of ridicule, without thought of bravado, solely because these men acknowledge no judge but themselves. A hundred traits depict the times; a lack of love for reading, a lingering belief in witches, rustic and sporting manners, the ignorances of an artless or backward mind. Sir Roger gives

the children, who answer their catechism well, a Bible for themselves, and half a fitch of bacon for their mothers. When a verse pleases him, he sings it for half a minute after the congregation has finished. He kills eight fat pigs at Christmas, and sends a pudding and a pack of cards to each poor family in the parish. When he goes to the theatre, he supplies his servants with cudgels to protect themselves from the thieves which, he says, infest London. Addison returns a score of times to the old knight, always showing some new aspect of his character, a disinterested observer of humanity, curiously assiduous and discerning, a true creator, having but one step farther to go to enter, like Richardson and Fielding, upon the great work of modern literature, the novel of manners and customs.

There is an undercurrent of poetry in all this. It has flowed through his prose a thousand times more sincere and beautiful than in his verses. Rich oriental fancies are displayed, not with a shower of sparks as in Voltaire, but in a calm and abundant light, which makes the regular folds of their purple and gold undulate.¹ The music of the vast cadenced and tranquil phrases leads the mind gently amidst romantic splendours and enchantments, and the deep sentiment of ever young nature recalls the happy quietude of Spenser. Through gentle railleries or moral essays we feel that the author's imagination is happy, delighted in the contemplation of the swaying to and fro of the forest-tops which clothe the mountains, the eternal verdure of the valleys, invigorated by fresh springs, and the wide view undulating far away on the distant horizon. Great and simple sentiments naturally join these noble images, and their measured

¹ See the history of *Alnaschar* in the *Spectator*, No. 535, and also that of *Hilpa* in the same paper, Nos. 584, 585.

harmony creates a unique spectacle, worthy to fascinate the heart of a good man by its gravity and sweetness. Such are the Visions of Mirza, which I will give almost entire :

“On the fifth day of the moon, which according to the custom of my forefathers I always keep holy, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hills of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer. As I was here airing myself on the tops of the mountains, I fell into a profound contemplation on the vanity of human life ; and passing from one thought to another : Surely, said I, man is but a shadow and life a dream. Whilst I was thus musing, I cast my eyes towards the summit of a rock that was not far from me, where I discovered one in the habit of a shepherd, with a musical instrument in his hand. As I looked upon him he applied it to his lips, and began to play upon it. The sound of it was exceeding sweet, and wrought into a variety of tunes that were inexpressibly melodious, and altogether different from anything I had ever heard. They put me in mind of those heavenly airs that are played to the departed souls of good men upon their first arrival in Paradise, to wear out the impressions of the last agonies, and qualify them for the pleasures of that happy place. My heart melted away in secret raptures. . . .

“He (the Genius) then led me to the highest pinnacle of the rock, and placing me on the top of it, Cast thy eyes eastward, said he, and tell me what thou seest. I see, said I, a huge valley, and a prodigious tide of water rolling through it. The valley that thou seest, said he, is the vale of misery, and the tide of water that thou seest is part of the great tide of Eternity. What is the reason, said I, that the tide I see rises out of a thick mist at one end, and again loses itself in a thick mist at the other ? What thou seest, said he, is that portion of Eternity which is called Time, measured out by the Sun, and reaching from the beginning of the world to its consummation. Ex-

amine now, said he, this sea that is bounded with darkness at both ends, and tell me what thou discoverest in it. I see a bridge, said I, standing in the midst of the tide. The bridge thou seest, said he, is human life; consider it attentively. Upon a more leisurely survey of it, I found that it consisted of three score and ten entire arches, with several broken arches, which added to those that were entire, made up the number about an hundred. As I was counting the arches, the genius told me that this bridge consisted at first of a thousand arches: but that a great flood swept away the rest, and left the bridge in the ruinous condition I now beheld it. But tell me further, said he, what thou discoverest on it. I see multitudes of people passing over it, said I, and a black cloud hanging on each end of it. As I looked more attentively, I saw several of the passengers dropping through the bridge into the great tide that flowed underneath it; and upon further examination, perceived there were innumerable trap-doors that lay concealed in the bridge, which the passengers no sooner trod upon, but they fell through them into the tide, and immediately disappeared. These hidden pit-falls were set very thick at the entrance of the bridge, so that throngs of people no sooner broke through the cloud, but many of them fell into them. They grew thinner towards the middle, but multiplied and lay closer together towards the end of the arches that were entire.

"There were indeed some persons, but their number was very small, that continued a kind of hobbling march on the broken arches, but fell through one after another, being quite tired and spent with so long a walk.

"I passed some time in the contemplation of this wonderful structure, and the great variety of objects which it presented. My heart was filled with a deep melancholy to see several dropping unexpectedly in the midst of mirth and jollity, and catching at everything that stood by them to save themselves. Some were looking up towards the Heavens in a thoughtful posture, and in the midst of a Speculation stumbled and fell out of

sight. Multitudes were very busy in the pursuit of bubbles that glittered in their eyes and danced before them ; but often when they thought themselves within the reach of them, their footing failed, and down they sunk. In this confusion of objects, I observed some with scimitars in their hands, and others with urinals, who ran to and fro upon the bridge, thrusting several persons on trap-doors which did not seem to lie in their way, and which they might have escaped had they not been thus forced upon them. . . .

“ I here fetched a deep sigh. Alas, said I, man was made in vain ! How is he given away to misery and mortality ! tortured in life, and swallowed up in death !—The Genius, being moved with compassion towards me, bid me quit so uncomfortable a prospect. Look no more, said he, on man in the first stage of his existence, in his setting out for eternity ; but cast thine eye on that thick mist into which the tide bears the several generations of mortals that fall into it. I directed my sight as I was ordered, and (whether or no the good Genius strengthened it with any supernatural force, or dissipated part of the mist that was before too thick for the eye to penetrate) I saw the valley opening at the farther end, and spreading forth into an immense ocean, that had a huge rock of adamant running through the midst of it, and dividing it into two equal parts. The clouds still rested on one half of it, insomuch that I could discover nothing in it : but the other appeared to me a vast ocean planted with innumerable islands, that were covered with fruits and flowers, and interwoven with a thousand little shining seas that ran among them. I could see persons dressed in glorious habits, with garlands upon their heads, passing among the trees, lying down by the sides of the fountains, or resting on beds of flowers ; and could hear a confused harmony of singing birds, falling waters, human voices, and musical instruments. Gladness grew in me upon the discovery of so delightful a scene. I wished for the wings of an eagle, that I might

fly away to those happy seats ; but the Genius told me there was no passage to them, except through the gates of death that I saw opening every moment upon the bridge. The islands, said he, that lie so fresh and green before thee, and with which the whole face of the ocean appears spotted as far as thou canst see, are more in number than the sands on the sea-shore ; there are myriads of islands behind those which thou here discoverest, reaching farther than thine eye, or even thine imagination, can extend itself. These are the mansions of good men after death, who according to the degree and kinds of virtue in which they excelled, are distributed among these several islands, which abound with pleasures of different kinds and degrees, suitable to the relishes and perfections of those who are settled in them : every island is a paradise accommodated to its respective inhabitants. Are not these, O Mirza, habitations, worth contending for ! Does life appear miserable, that gives thee opportunities of earning such a reward ! Is death to be feared, that will convey thee to so happy an existence ! Think not man was made in vain, who has such an eternity reserved for him.—I gazed with inexpressible pleasure on these happy islands. At length, said I, shew me now, I beseech thee, the secrets that lie hid under those dark clouds which cover the ocean on the other side of the rock of Adamant. The Genius making me no answer, I turned me about to address myself to him a second time, but I found that he had left me ; I then turned again to the vision which I had been so long contemplating : but instead of the rolling tide, the arched bridge, and the happy islands, I saw nothing but the long hollow valley of Bagdat, with oxen, sheep, and camels grazing upon the sides of it.”¹

In this ornate moral sketch, this fine reasoning, so correct and so eloquent, this ingenious and noble imagination, I find an epitome of all Addison’s charac-

¹ *Spectator*, No. 159.

teristics. These are the English tints which distinguish this classical age from that of the French : a narrower and more practical argument, a more poetical and less eloquent urbanity, a structure of mind more inventive and more rich, less sociable and less refined.

CHAPTER V.

Swift.

IN 1685, in the great hall of Dublin University, the professors engaged in examining for the bachelor's degree beheld a singular spectacle: a poor scholar, odd, awkward, with hard blue eyes, an orphan, friendless, dependent on the precarious charity of an uncle, having failed once before to take his degree on account of his ignorance of logic, had come up again without having condescended to read logic. To no purpose his tutor set before him the most respectable folios—Smiglecius, Keckermannus, Burgerdiscius. He turned over a few pages, and shut them directly. When the argumentation came on, the proctor was obliged to “reduce his replies into syllogism.” He was asked how he could reason well without rules; he replied that he did reason pretty well without them. This folly shocked them; yet he was received, though with some difficulty, *speciali gratia*, says the college register, and the professors went away, doubtless with pitying smiles, lamenting the feeble brain of Jonathan Swift.

I.

This was his first humiliation and his first rebellion. His whole life was like this moment, overwhelmed and made wretched by sorrow and hatred. To what excess they rose, his portrait and his history alone can

show. He fostered an exaggerated and terrible pride, and made the haughtiness of the most powerful ministers and greatest lords bend beneath his arrogance. Though only a literary man, possessing nothing but a small Irish living, he treated them on a footing of equality. Harley, the prime minister, having sent him a bank-bill of fifty pounds for his first articles, he was offended at being taken for a hack writer, returned the money, demanded an apology, received it, and wrote in his journal: "I have taken Mr. Harley into favour again."¹ On another occasion, having observed that the Secretary of State, St. John, looked upon him coldly, he rebuked him for it:

"One thing I warned him of, never to appear cold to me, for I would not be treated like a school-boy; that I expected every great minister who honoured me with his acquaintance, if he heard or saw anything to my disadvantage, would let me know in plain words, and not put me in pain to guess by the change or coldness of his countenance or behaviour; for it was what I would hardly bear from a crowned head; and I thought no subject's favour was worth it: and that I designed to let my Lord Keeper and Mr. Harley know the same thing, that they might use me accordingly."²

St. John approved of this, made excuses, said that he had passed several nights at "business, and one night at drinking," and that his fatigue might have seemed like ill-humour. In the minister's drawing-room Swift

¹ In Swift's Works, ed. W. Scott, 19 vols. 1814; *Journal to Stella*, ii. Feb. 13 (1710-11). He says also (Feb. 6 and 7): "I will not see him (Mr. Harley) till he makes amends. . . . I was deaf to all entreaties, and have desired Lewis to go to him, and let him know that I expect farther satisfaction. If we let these great ministers pretend too much, there will be no governing them."

² *Ibid.* April 3, 1711.

went up and spoke to some obscure person, and compelled the lords to come and speak to him :

"Mr. Secretary told me the Duke of Buckingham had been talking to him much about me, and desired my acquaintance. I answered, it could not be, for he had not made sufficient advances. Then the Duke of Shrewsbury said, he thought the Duke was not used to make advances. I said, I could not help that ; for I always expected advances in proportion to men's quality, and more from a duke than other men."¹

"Saw Lord Halifax at court, and we joined and talked, and the Duchess of Shrewsbury came up and reproached me for not dining with her : I said that was not so soon done ; for I expected more advances from ladies, especially duchesses : She promised to comply. . . . Lady Oglethorp brought me and the Duchess of Hamilton together to-day in the drawing-room, and I have given her some encouragement, but not much."²

He triumphed in his arrogance, and said with a restrained joy, full of vengeance : "I generally am acquainted with about thirty in the drawing-room, and am so proud that I make all the lords come up to me. One passes half an hour pleasant enough." He carried his triumph to the verge of brutality and tyranny ; writing to the Duchess of Queensberry, he says : "I am glad you know your duty ; for it has been a known and established rule above twenty years in England, that the first advances have been constantly made me by all ladies who aspired to my acquaintance, and the greater their quality, the greater were their advances."³ The famous General Webb, with his crutch and cane, limped up two flights of stairs to congratulate him and invite him to dinner ; Swift accepted, then an hour later withdrew his

¹ Swift's Works, *Journal to Stella*, ii. May 19, 1711.

² *Ibid.* Oct. 7, 1711.

³ *Ibid.* xvii. p. 352.

consent, preferring to dine elsewhere. He seemed to look upon himself as a superior being, exempt from the necessity of showing his respects to any one, entitled to homage, caring neither for sex, rank, nor fame, whose business it was to protect and destroy, distributing favours, insults, and pardons. Addison, and after him Lady Gifford, a friend of twenty years' standing, having offended him, he refused to take them back into his favour until they had asked his pardon. Lord Lansdown, Secretary for War, being annoyed by an expression in the *Examiner*, Swift says: "This I resented highly that he should complain of me before he spoke to me. I sent him a peppering letter, and would not summon him by a note, as I did the rest; nor ever will have anything to say to him, till he begs my pardon."¹ He treated art like man, writing a thing off, scorning the wretched necessity of reading it over, putting his name to nothing, letting every piece make its way on its own merits, unassisted, without the prestige of his name, recommended by none. He had the soul of a dictator, thirsting after power, and saying openly: "All my endeavours, from a boy, to distinguish myself were only for want of a great title and fortune, that I might be treated like a lord. . . . whether right or wrong, it is no great matter; and so the reputation of wit or great learning does the office of a blue ribbon, or of a coach and six horses."² But he thought this power and rank due to him; he did not ask, but expected them. "I will never beg for myself, though I often do it for others." He desired ruling power, and acted as if he had it. Hatred and misfortune find a congenial soil

¹ *Journal to Stella*, iii. March 27, 1711-12.

Letter to Bolingbroke, Dublin, April 5. 1729.

in these despotic minds. They live like fallen kings, always insulting and offended, having all the miseries but none of the consolations of pride, unable to relish either society or solitude, too ambitious to be content with silence, too haughty to use the world, born for rebellion and defeat, destined by their passions and impotence to despair and to talent.

Sensitiveness in Swift's case aggravated the stings of pride. Under this outward calmness of countenance and style raged furious passions. There was within him a ceaseless tempest of wrath and desire: "A person of great honour in Ireland (who was pleased to stoop so low as to look into my mind) used to tell me that my mind was like a conjured spirit, that would do mischief, if I would not give it employment." Resentment sunk deeper in him than in other men. Listen to the profound sigh of joyful hatred with which he sees his enemies under his feet: "The whigs were ravished to see me, and would lay hold on me as a twig while they are drowning; and the great men making me their clumsy apologies."¹ "It is good to see what a lamentable confession the whigs all make of my ill-usage."² And soon after: "Rot them, for ungrateful dogs; I will make them repent their usage before I leave this place."³ He is satiated and has glutted his appetite; like a wolf or a lion, he cares for nothing else.

This impetuosity led him to every sort of madness and violence. His *Drapier's Letters* had roused Ireland against the government, and the government had issued a proclamation offering a reward to any one who would denounce the Drapier. Swift came suddenly into the

¹ *Journal to Stella*, ii, Sept. 9, 1710.

² *Ibid.* Sept. 30, 1710.

³ *Ibid.* Nov. 8, 1710.

reception-chamber, elbowed the groups, went up to the lord-lieutenant, with indignation on his countenance, and in a thundering voice, said: "So, my lord, this is a glorious exploit that you performed yesterday, in suffering a proclamation against a poor shopkeeper, whose only crime is an honest endeavour to save his country from ruin."¹ And he broke out into railing amidst general silence and amazement. The lord-lieutenant, a man of sense, answered calmly. Before such a torrent men turned aside. This chaotic and self-devouring heart could not understand the calmness of his friends; he asked them: "Do not the corruptions and villainies of men eat your flesh, and exhaust your spirits?"²

Resignation was repulsive to him. His actions, abrupt and strange, broke out amidst his silent moods like flashes of lightning. He was eccentric and violent in everything, in his pleasantry, in his private affairs, with his friends, with unknown people; he was often taken for a madman. Addison and his friends had seen for several days at Button's coffee-house a singular parson, who laid his hat on the table, walked for half-an-hour backward and forward, paid his money, and left, having attended to nothing and said nothing. They called him the mad parson. One day this parson perceives a gentleman "just come out of the country," went straight up to him, "and in a very abrupt manner, without any previous salute, asked him, 'Pray sir, do you remember any good weather in the world?' The country gentleman, after staring a little at the singularity of his (Swift's) manner and the oddity of the question, answered, 'Yes, sir, I thank God, I remember a great deal of good weather in my time.' 'That is more,' said Swift,

¹ *Swift's Life*, by Roscoe, i. 56.

² *Swift's Life*, by W. Scott, i. 279.

'than I can say; I never remember any weather that was not too hot, or too cold, too wet or too dry; but, however God Almighty contrives it, at the end of the year 'tis all very well.'"¹ Another day, dining with the Earl of Burlington, the Dean said to the mistress of the house, "Lady Burlington, I hear you can sing; sing me a song." The lady looked on this unceremonious manner of asking a favour with distaste, and positively refused. He said, "she should sing, or he would make her. Why, madam, I suppose you take me for one of your poor English hedge-parsons; sing when I bid you!" As the earl did nothing but laugh at this freedom, the lady was so vexed, that she burst into tears, and retired. His first compliment to her, when he saw her again, was, "Pray, madam, are you as proud and as ill-natured now as when I saw you last?"² People were astonished or amused at these outbursts; I see in them sobs and cries, the explosion of long, overwhelming and bitter thoughts; they are the starts of a mind unsubdued, shuddering, rebelling, breaking the barriers, wounding, crushing, or bruising every one on its road, or those who wish to stop it. Swift became mad at last; he felt this madness coming on, he has described it in a horrible manner; beforehand he has tasted all the disgust and bitterness of it; he showed it on his tragic face, in his terrible and wan eyes. This is the powerful and mournful genius which nature gave up as a prey to society and life; society and life poured all their poisons into him.

He knew what poverty and scorn were, even at that age when the mind expands, when the heart is full of

¹ Sheridan's *Life of Swift*.

² W. Scott's *Life of Swift*, i. 477.

pride,¹ when he was hardly maintained by the alms of his family, gloomy and without hope, feeling his strength and the dangers of his strength.² At twenty-one, as secretary to Sir William Temple, he had twenty pounds a year salary, sat at the same table with the upper servants,³ wrote Pindaric odes in honour of his master, spent ten years amidst the humiliations of servitude and the familiarity of the servants' hall, obliged to adulate a gouty and flattered courtier, to submit to my lady his sister, acutely pained "when Sir William Temple would look cold and out of humour,"⁴ lured by false hopes, forced after an attempt at independence to resume the livery which was choking him. "When you find years coming on, without hopes of a place at court, . . . I directly advise you to go upon the road which is the only post of honour left you; there you will meet many of your old comrades, and live a short life and a merry one."⁵ This is followed by instructions as to the conduct servants ought to display when led

¹ At that time he had already begun the *Tale of a Tub*.

² He addresses his muse thus, in *Verses occasioned by Sir William Temple's late illness and recovery*, xiv. 45:

"Wert thou right woman, thou should'st scorn to look
On an abandoned wretch by hopes forsook;
Forsook by hopes, ill fortune's last relief,
Assign'd for life to unremitting grief;

To thee I owe that fatal bent of mind
Still to unhappy restless thoughts inclined;
To thee, what oft I vainly strive to hide,
That scorn of fools, by fools mistook for pride."

³ These assertions have been denied. See Roscoe's *Life of Swift*, i. 14.—Tr.

⁴ "Don't you remember how I used to be in pain when Sir William Temple would look cold and out of humour for three or four days, and I used to suspect a hundred reasons? I have plucked up my spirit since then, faith; he spoiled a fine gentleman."—*Journal to Stella*, April 4, 1710-11.

⁵ *Directions to Servants*, xii. ch. iii. 484.

to the gallows. Such are his *Directions to Servants*; he was relating what he had suffered. At the age of thirty-one, expecting a place from William III., he edited the works of his patron, dedicated them to the sovereign, sent him a memorial, got nothing, and fell back upon the post of chaplain and private secretary to the Earl of Berkeley. He soon remained only chaplain to that nobleman, feeling all the disgust which the part of ecclesiastical valet must inspire in a man of feeling.

"You know I honour the cloth,"

Says the chambermaid in the well-known *Petition* :

"I design to be a parson's wife. . .

And over and above, that I may have your excellency's letter
With an order for the chaplain aforesaid, or instead of him a
better." ¹

The earl, having promised him the deanery of Derry, gave it to another. Driven to politics, he wrote a whig pamphlet, *A Discourse on the Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome*, received from Lord Halifax and the party leaders a score of fine promises, and was neglected. Twenty years of insults without revenge, and humiliations without respite; the inner tempest of fostered and crushed hopes, vivid and brilliant dreams, suddenly withered by the necessity of a mechanical duty; the habit of suffering and hatred, the necessity of concealing these, the baneful consciousness of superiority, the isolation of genius and pride, the bitterness of accumulated wrath and pent-up scorn,—these were the goads which pricked him like a bull. More than a thousand pamphlets in four years, stung him still more, with such designations as renegade, traitor, and atheist. He

¹ *Mrs. Harris' Petition*, xiv. 52.

crushed them all, set his foot on the Whig party, solaced himself with the poignant pleasure of victory. If ever a soul was satiated with the joy of tearing, outraging, and destroying, it was his. Excess of scorn, implacable irony, crushing logic, the cruel smile of the foe-man, who sees beforehand the spot where he will wound his enemy mortally, advances towards him, tortures him deliberately, eagerly, with enjoyment,—such were the feelings which had leavened him, and which broke from him with such harshness that he hindered his own career;¹ and that of so many high places for which he stretched out his hands, there remained for him only a deanery in poor Ireland. The accession of George I. exiled him thither; the accession of George II., on which he had counted, confined him there. He contended there first against popular hatred, then against the victorious minister, then against entire humanity, in sanguinary pamphlets, despairing satires;² he tasted there once more the pleasure of fighting and wounding; he suffered there to the end, soured by the advance of years, by the spectacle of oppression and misery, by the feeling of his own impotence, enraged to have to live amongst “an enslaved people,” chained and vanquished. He says: “I find myself disposed every year, or rather every month, to be more angry and revengeful; and my rage is so ignoble, that it descends even to resent the folly and baseness of the enslaved people among whom I live.”³ This cry is the epitome of his public

¹ By the *Tale of a Tub* with the clergy, and by the *Prophecy of Windsor* with the queen.

² *The Drapier's Letters*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Rhapsody on Poetry*, *A modest Proposal for preventing the Children of poor people in Ireland from being a burden to their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the public*, and several pamphlets on Ireland.

³ Letter to Lord Bolingbroke. Dublin, March 21, 1728, xvii. 274.

life; these feelings are the materials which public life furnished to his talent.

He experienced these feelings also in private life, more violent and more inwardly. He had brought up and purely loved a charming, well-informed, modest young girl, Esther Johnson, who from infancy had loved and revered him alone. She lived with him, he had made her his confidante. From London, during his political struggles, he sent her the full journal of his slightest actions; he wrote to her twice a day, with extreme ease and familiarity, with all the playfulness, vivacity, petting and caressing names of the tenderest attachment. Yet another girl, beautiful and rich, Miss Vanhomrigh, attached herself to him, declared her passion, received from him several marks of his own, followed him to Ireland, sometimes jealous, sometimes submissive, but so impassioned, so unhappy, that her letters might have broken a harder heart: "If you continue to treat me as you do, you will not be made uneasy by me long. . . . I am sure I could have borne the rack much better, than those killing, killing words of you. . . . Oh that you may have but so much regard for me left, that this complaint may touch your soul with pity!"¹ She pined and died. Esther Johnson, who had so long possessed Swift's whole heart, suffered still more. All was changed in Swift's house. "At my first coming (at Laracor) I thought I should have died with discontent, and was horribly melancholy while they were installing me."² He found tears, distrust, resentment, cold silence, in place of familiarity and tenderness.

¹ Letter of Miss Vanhomrigh, Dublin, 1714, xix. 421.

² These words are taken from a letter to Miss Vanhomrigh, 8th July 1718, and cannot refer to her death, which took place in 1721.—Tr.

He married Miss Johnson from a feeling of duty, but in secret, and on condition that she should only be his wife in name. She was twelve years dying; Swift went away to England as often as he could. His house was a hell to him; it is thought that some secret physical cause had influenced his loves and his marriage. Delany, his biographer, having once found him talking with Archbishop King, saw the archbishop in tears, and Swift rushing by, with a countenance full of grief, and a distracted air. "Sir," said the prelate, "you have just met the most unhappy man upon earth; but on the subject of his wretchedness you must never ask a question." Esther Johnson died. Swift's anguish, the spectres by which he was haunted, the remembrance of the two women, slowly ruined and killed by his fault, continually encompassed him with such horrors, that only his end reveals them. "It is time for me to have done with the world . . . and so I would . . . and not die here in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole."¹ Overwork and excess of emotion had made him ill from his youth; he was subject to giddiness; he lost his hearing. He had long felt that reason was deserting him. One day he was observed "gazing intently at the top of a lofty elm, the head of which had been blasted. Upon his friend's approach, he pointed to it, significantly adding, 'I shall be like that tree, and die first at the top.'"² His memory left him; he received the attentions of others with disgust, sometimes with rage. He lived alone, gloomy, unable to read. It is said that he passed a whole year without uttering a word, hating the sight of a human being, walking ten hours

¹ Letter to Bolingbroke, Dublin, March 21, 1728, xvii. 276.

² Roscoe's *Life of Swift*, i. 80.

a day, a maniac, then an idiot. A tumour came on one of his eyes, so that he continued a month without sleeping, and five men were needed to prevent his tearing out the eye with his nails. One of his last words was, "I am a fool." When his will was opened, it was found that he left his whole fortune to build a madhouse.

II.

These passions and these miseries were necessary to inspire *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Tale of a Tub*.

A strange and powerful form of mind, too, was necessary, as English as his pride and his passions. Swift has the style of a surgeon and a judge, cold, grave, solid, unadorned, without vivacity or passion, manly and practical. He desired neither to please, nor to divert, nor to carry people away, nor to move the feelings; he never hesitated, nor was redundant, nor was excited, nor made an effort. He expressed his thoughts in a uniform tone, with exact, precise, often harsh terms, with familiar comparisons, levelling all within reach of his hand, even the loftiest things—especially the loftiest—with a brutal and always haughty coolness. He knows life as a banker knows accounts; and his total once made up, he scorns or knocks down the babblers who dispute it in his presence.

He knows the items as well as the sum total. He not only familiarly and vigorously seized on every object, but he also decomposed it, and kept an inventory of its details. His imagination was as minute as it was energetic. He could give you a statement of dry facts on every event and object, so connected and natural as to deceive any man. *Gulliver's Travels* read like a log-book.

Isaac Bickerstaff's predictions were taken literally by the inquisition in Portugal. His account of M. du Baudrier seems an authentic translation. He gives to an extravagant romance the air of a genuine history. By this thorough knowledge of details he imports into literature the positive spirit of men of business and experience. Nothing could be more vigorous, narrow, unhappy, for nothing could be more destructive. No greatness, false or true, can stand before him; whatsoever he fathoms and takes in hand loses at once its prestige and value. Whilst he decomposes he displays the real ugliness, and removes the fictitious beauty of objects. Whilst he brings them to the level of common things, he suppresses their real beauty, and gives them a fictitious ugliness. He presents all their gross features, and nothing but their gross features. Look with him into the physical details of science, religion, state, and with him reduce science, religion, state, to the low standing of every-day events; with him you will see here a Bedlam of shrivelled-up dreamers, narrow and chimerical brains, busy in contradicting each other, picking up meaningless phrases in mouldy books, inventing conjectures, and crying them up for truth; there, a band of enthusiasts, mumbling phrases which they do not understand, adoring figures of rhetoric as mysteries, attaching ideas of holiness or impiety to lawn-sleeves or postures, spending in persecutions or genuflexions the surplus of sheepish or ferocious folly with which an evil fate has crammed their brains; there, again, flocks of idiots pouring out their blood and treasure for the whims or plots of a carriage-drawn aristocrat, out of respect for the carriage which they themselves have given him. What part of human nature or existence can continue

great and beautiful, before a mind which, penetrating all details, perceives men eating, sleeping, dressing, in all mean and low actions, degrading everything to the level of vulgar events, trivial circumstances of dress and cookery? It is not enough for the positive mind to see the springs, pulleys, lamps, and whatever there is objectionable in the opera at which he is present; he makes it more objectionable by calling it a show. It is not enough not to ignore anything; we must also refuse to admire. He treats things like domestic utensils; after reckoning up their materials, he gives them a vile name. Nature for him is but a caldron, and he knows the proportion and number of the ingredients simmering in it. In this power and this weakness we see beforehand the misanthropy and the talent of Swift.

There are, indeed, but two modes of agreeing with the world: mediocrity of mind and superiority of intelligence—the one for the public and the fools, the other for artists and philosophers: the one consists in seeing nothing, the other in seeing all. We will respect the respectable, if we see only the surface—if we take them as they are, if we let ourselves be duped by the fine show which they never fail to present. We will revere the gold-embroidered garments with which our masters bedizen themselves, and we will never dream of examining the stains hidden under the embroidery. We will be moved by the big words which they pronounce in a sublime voice, and we will never see in their pockets the hereditary phrase-book from which they have taken them. We will punctiliously bring them our money and our services; the custom will seem to us just, and we will accept the goose-dogma, that a goose is bound to be roasted. But,

on the other hand, we will tolerate and even love the world, if, penetrating to its nature, we take the trouble to explain or imitate its mechanism. We will be interested in passions by an artist's sympathy or a philosopher's comprehension; we will find them natural whilst admitting their force, or we will find them necessary whilst computing their connection; we will cease to be indignant against the powers which produce fine spectacles, or will cease to be roused by the rebounds which the law of cause and effect had foretold. We will admire the world as a grand drama, or as an invincible development; and we will be preserved by imagination or by logic from slander or disgust. We will extract from religion the lofty truths which dogmas hide, and the generous instincts which superstition conceals. We will perceive in the state the infinite benefits which no tyranny abolishes, and the sociable inclinations which no wickedness uproots. We will distinguish in science the solid doctrines which discussion never shakes, the liberal notions which the shock of systems purifies and unfolds, the splendid promises which the progress of the present time opens up to the ambition of the future. We can thus escape hatred by the nullity or the greatness of the prospect, by the inability to discover contrasts, or by the power to discover the harmony of contrasts. Raised above the first, sunk beneath the last, seeing evil and disorder, ignoring goodness and harmony, excluded from love and calmness, given up to indignation and bitterness, Swift found neither a cause to cherish, nor a doctrine to establish;¹ he employs the

¹ In his *Thoughts on Religion* (viii. 173) he says: "The want of belief is a defect that ought to be concealed, when it cannot be over-

whole force of an excellently armed mind and a thoroughly trained character in decrying and destroying : all his works are pamphlets.

III.

At this time, and in his hands, the newspaper in England attained its proper character and its greatest force. Literature entered the sphere of politics. To understand what the one became, we must understand what the other was : art depended upon political business, and the spirit of parties made the spirit of writers.

In France a theory arises—eloquent, harmonious, and generous ; the young are enamoured of it, wear a cap and sing songs in its honour : at night, the citizens, while digesting their dinner, read it and delight in it ; some, hotheaded, accept it, and prove to themselves their strength of mind by ridiculing those who are behind the times. On the other hand, the established people, prudent and timid, are mistrustful : being well off, they find that everything is well, and demand that things shall continue as they are. Such are the two parties in France, very old, as we all know ; not very earnest, as everybody can see. They must talk, be enthusiastic, reason on speculative opinions, glibly, about an hour a day, indulging but outwardly in this taste ; but these parties are so equally levelled, that they are at bottom all the same : when we understand them rightly, we will find in France only two parties, the men of twenty and the men of forty. English parties, on the other hand, were always compact and

come." "I look upon myself, in the capacity of a clergyman, to be one appointed by Providence for defending a post assigned me, and for gaining over as many enemies as I can."

living bodies, united by interests of money, rank, and conscience, receiving theories only as standards or as a balance, a sort of secondary States, which, like the two old orders in Rome, legally endeavour to monopolise the government. So, the English constitution was never more than a transaction between distinct powers, compelled to tolerate each other, disposed to encroach on each other, occupied in treating with each other. Politics for them are a domestic interest, for the French an occupation of the mind; Englishmen make them a business, the French a discussion.

Thus their pamphlets, notably Swift's, seem to us only half literary. For an argument to be literary, it must not address itself to an interest or a faction, but to the pure mind: it must be based on universal truths, rest on absolute justice, be able to touch all human reasons; otherwise, being local, it is simply useful: nothing is beautiful but what is general. It must also be developed regularly by analysis, and with exact divisions; its distribution must give a picture of pure reason; the order of ideas must be inviolable; every mind must be able to draw thence with ease a complete conviction; its method, its principles, must be sensible throughout, in all places and at all times. The desire to prove well must be added to the art of proving well; the writer must announce his proof, recall it, present it under all its faces, desire to penetrate minds, pursue them persistently in all their retreats; but at the same time he must treat his hearers like men worthy of comprehending and applying general truths; his discourse must be lively, noble, polished, and fervid, so as to suit such subjects and such minds. It is thus that classical prose and French prose are

eloquent, and that political dissertations or religious controversies have endured as models of art.

This good taste and philosophy are wanting in the positive mind; it wishes to attain not eternal beauty, but present success. Swift does not address men in general, but certain men. He does not speak to reasoners, but to a party; he does not care to teach a truth, but to make an impression; his aim is not to enlighten that isolated part of man, called his mind, but to stir up the mass of feelings and prejudices which constitute the actual man. Whilst he writes, his public is before his eyes: fat squires, puffed out with port wine and beef, accustomed at the end of their meals to bawl loyally for church and king; gentlemen farmers, bitter against London luxury and the new importance of merchants; clergymen bred on pedantic sermons, and old-established hatred of dissenters and papists. These people have not mind enough to pursue a fine deduction or understand an abstract principle. A writer must calculate the facts they know, the ideas they have received, the interests that move them, and recall only these facts, reason only from these ideas, set in motion only these interests. It is thus Swift speaks, without development, without logical hits, without rhetorical effects, but with extraordinary force and success, in phrases whose accuracy his contemporaries inwardly felt, and which they accepted at once, because they simply told them in a clear form and openly, what they murmured obscurely and to themselves. Such was the power of the *Examiner*, which in one year transformed the opinion of three kingdoms; and particularly of the *Drapier's Letters*, which made a government withdraw one of their measures.

Small change was lacking in Ireland, and the English ministers had given a certain William Wood a patent to coin one hundred and eight thousand pounds of copper money. A commission, of which Newton was a member, verified the pieces made, found them good, and several competent judges still think that the measure was loyal and serviceable to the land. Swift roused the people against it, spoke to them in an intelligible style, and triumphed over common sense and the state.¹

"Brethren, friends, countrymen, and fellow-subjects, what I intend now to say to you is, next to your duty to God and the care of your salvation, of the greatest concern to you and your children: your bread and clothing, and every common necessary of life depend upon it. Therefore I do most earnestly exhort you as men, as Christians, as parents, and as lovers of your country, to read this paper with the utmost attention, or get it read to you by others; which that you may do at the less expence, I have ordered the printer to sell it at the lowest rate."²

We see popular distrust spring up at a glance; this is the style which reaches workmen and peasants; this simplicity, these details, are necessary to penetrate their belief. The author is like a draper, and they trust only men of their own condition. Swift goes on to accuse Wood, declaring that his copper pieces are not worth one-eighth their nominal value. There is no trace of proof: no proofs are required to convince the people; it is enough to repeat the same accusation

¹ Whatever has been said, I do not think that he wrote the *Drapier's Letters*, whilst thinking the introduction of small copper coin an advantage for Ireland. It was possible, for Swift more than for another, to believe in a ministerial job. He seems to me to have been at bottom an honest man.

² *Drapier's Letters*, vii. ; Letter 1, 97.

again and again, to abound in intelligible examples, to strike eye and ear. The imagination once gained, they will go on shouting, convincing themselves by their own cries, and incapable of reasoning. Swift says to his adversaries :

“Your paragraph relates further that Sir Isaac Newton reported an assay taken at the Tower of Wood’s metal ; by which it appears that Wood had in all respects performed his contract. His contract ! With whom ? Was it with the Parliament or people of Ireland ? Are not they to be the purchasers ? But they detest, abhor, and reject it as corrupt, fraudulent, mingled with dirt and trash.”¹

And a little further on :

“His first proposal is, that he will be content to coin no more (than forty thousand pounds), unless the *exigencies of the trade require it*, although his patent empowers him to coin a far greater quantity. . . . To which if I were to answer, it should be thus : let Mr. Wood and his crew of founders and tinkers coin on, till there is not an old kettle left in the kingdom ; let them coin old leather, tobacco-pipe clay, or the dirt in the street, and call their trumpery by what name they please from a guinea to a farthing ; we are not under any concern to know how he and his tribe of accomplices think fit to employ themselves. But I hope, and trust, that we are all, to a man, fully determined to have nothing to do with him or his ware.”²

Swift gets angry and does not answer. In fact, this is the best way to answer ; to move such hearers we must stir up their blood and their passions ; then shopkeepers and farmers will turn up their sleeves, double their fists ; and the good arguments of their opponents will only increase their desire to knock them down.

¹ *Drapier’s Letters*, vii. ; Letter 2, 114.

² *Ibid.* vii. ; Letter 2, 115.

Now see how a mass of examples makes a gratuitous assertion probable :

“ Your Newsletter says that an assay was made of the coin. How impudent and insupportable is this ! Wood takes care to coin a dozen or two halfpence of good metal, sends them to the Tower, and they are approved ; and these must answer all that he has already coined, or shall coin for the future. It is true, indeed, that a gentleman often sends to my shop for a pattern of stuff ; I cut it fairly off, and if he likes it, he comes or sends and compares the pattern with the whole piece, and probably we come to a bargain. But if I were to buy a hundred sheep, and the grazier should bring me one single wether, fat and well fleeced, by way of pattern, and expect the same price round for the whole hundred, without suffering me to see them before he was paid, or giving me good security to restore my money for those that were lean, or shorn, or scabby, I would be none of his customer. I have heard of a man who had a mind to sell his house, and therefore carried a piece of brick in his pocket, which he showed as a pattern to encourage purchasers ; and this is directly the case in point with Mr. Wood’s assay.”¹

A burst of laughter follows ; butchers and bricklayers were gained over. As a finish, Swift showed them a practical expedient, suited to their understanding and their rank in life :

“ The common soldier, when he goes to the market or ale-house, will offer his money ; and if it be refused, perhaps he will swagger and hector, and threaten to beat the butcher or alewife, or take the goods by force, and throw them the bad half-pence. In this and the like cases, the shopkeeper or victualler, or any other tradesman, has no more to do than to demand ten times the price of his goods, if it is to be paid in Wood’s money ; for example, twenty-pence of that money for a quart of ale, and so

¹ *Drapier’s Letters*, vii. ; Letter 2, 114.

in all things else, and never part with his goods till he gets the money."¹

Public clamour overcame the English Government; they withdrew the money and paid Wood a large indemnity. Such is the merit of Swift's arguments; good tools, trenchant and handy, neither elegant nor bright, but whose value is proved by their effect.

The whole beauty of these pamphlets is in their tone. They have neither the generous fire of Pascal, nor the bewildering gaiety of Beaumarchais, nor the chiselled delicacy of Paul Louis Courier, but an overwhelming air of superiority and a bitter and terrible rancour. Vast passion and pride, like the positive "Drapier's" mind just now described, have given all the blows their force. We should read his *Public Spirit of the Whigs*, against Steele. Page by page Steele is torn to pieces with a calmness and scorn never equalled. Swift approaches regularly, leaving no part untouched, heaping wound on wound, every blow sure, knowing beforehand their reach and depth. Poor Steele, a vain, thoughtless fellow, is in his hands like Gulliver amongst the giants; it is a pity to see a contest so unequal; and this contest is pitiless. Swift crushes him carefully and easily, like an obnoxious animal. The unfortunate man, formerly an officer and a semi-literary man, had made awkward use of constitutional words:

"Upon this rock the author . . . is perpetually splitting, as often as he ventures out beyond the narrow bounds of his literature. He has a confused remembrance of words since he left the university, but has lost half their meaning, and puts them together with no regard, except to their cadence; as I re-

¹ *Drapier's Letters*, vii. ; Letter 1, 101.

member, a fellow nailed up maps in a gentleman's closet, some sidelong, others upside down, the better to adjust them to the pannels."¹

When he judges he is worse than when he proves ; witness his *Short Character of Thomas Earl of Wharton*. He pierces him with the formulas of official politeness ; only an Englishman is capable of such phlegm and such haughtiness :

"I have had the honour of much conversation with his lordship, and am thoroughly convinced how indifferent he is to applause, and how insensible of reproach. . . . He is without the sense of shame, or glory, as some men are without the sense of smelling ; and therefore, a good name to him is no more than a precious ointment would be to these. Whoever, for the sake of others, were to describe the nature of a serpent, a wolf, a crocodile or a fox, must be understood to do it without any personal love or hatred for the animals themselves. In the same manner his excellency is one whom I neither personally love nor hate. I see him at court, at his own house, and sometimes at mine, for I have the honour of his visits ; and when these papers are public, it is odds but he will tell me, as he once did upon a like occasion, "that he is damnably mauled," and then, with the easiest transition in the world, ask about the weather, or time of the day ; so that I enter on the work with more cheerfulness, because I am sure neither to make him angry, nor any way hurt his reputation ; a pitch of happiness and security to which his excellency has arrived, and which no philosopher before him could reach. Thomas, Earl of Wharton, lord-lieutenant of Ireland, by the force of a wonderful constitution, has some years passed his grand climacteric without any visible effects of old age, either on his body or his

¹ *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*, iv. 405. See also in the *Examiner* the pamphlet against Marlborough under the name of Crassus, and the comparison between Roman generosity and English meanness.

mind ; and in spite of a continual prostitution to those vices which usually wear out both . . . Whether he walks or whistles, or swears, or talks bawdy, or calls names, he acquits himself in each, beyond a templar of three years' standing. With the same grace, and in the same style, he will rattle his coachman in the midst of the street, where he is governor of the kingdom ; and all this is without consequence, because it is in his character, and what everybody expects. . . . The ends he has gained by lying, appear to be more owing to the frequency, than the art of them ; his lies being sometimes detected in an hour, often in a day, and always in a week. . . . He swears solemnly he loves and will serve you ; and your back is no sooner turned, but he tells those about him, you are a dog and a rascal. He goes constantly to prayers in the forms of his place, and will talk bawdy and blasphemy at the chapel door. He is a presbyterian in politics, and an atheist in religion ; but he chooses at present to whore with a papist. In his commerce with mankind, his general rule is, to endeavour to impose on their understandings, for which he has but one receipt, a composition of lies and oaths. . . . He bears the gallantries of his lady with the indifference of a stoick ; and thinks them well recompensed, by a return of children to support his family, without the fatigues of being a father. . . . He was never yet known to refuse or keep a promise, as I remember he told a lady, but with an exception to the promise he then made (which was to get her a pension), yet he broke even that, and, I confess, deceived us both. But here I desire to distinguish between a promise and a bargain ; for he will be sure to keep the latter, when he has the fairest offer. . . . But here I must desire the reader's pardon, if I cannot digest the following facts in so good a manner as I intended ; because it is thought expedient, for some reasons, that the world should be informed of his excellency's merits as soon as possible. . . . As they are, they may serve for hints to any person who may hereafter have a mind to write memoirs of his excellency's life."¹

¹ Swift's Works, iv. 148.

Throughout this piece Swift's voice has remained calm ; not a muscle of his face has moved ; we perceive neither smile, flash of the eye, or gesture ; he speaks like a statue ; but his anger grows by constraint, and burns the more that it shines the less.

This is why his ordinary style is grave irony. It is the weapon of pride, meditation, and force. The man who employs it is self-contained whilst a storm is raging within him ; he is too proud to make a show of his passion ; he does not take the public into his confidence ; he elects to be solitary in his soul ; he would be ashamed to confide in any man ; he means and knows how to keep absolute possession of himself. Thus collected, he understands better and suffers more ; no fit of passion relieves his wrath or draws away his attention ; he feels all the points and penetrates to the depths of the opinion which he detests ; he multiplies his pain and his knowledge, and spares himself neither wound nor reflection. We must see Swift in this attitude, impassive in appearance, but with stiffening muscles, a heart scorched with hatred, writing with a terrible smile such pamphlets as this :

"It may perhaps be neither safe nor prudent, to argue against the abolishing of Christianity, at a juncture, when all parties appear so unanimously determined upon the point. . . . However, I know not how, whether from the affectation of singularity, or the perverseness of human nature, but so it unhappily falls out, that I cannot be entirely of this opinion. Nay, though I were sure an order were issued for my immediate prosecution by the attorney-general, I should still confess, that in the present posture of our affairs, at home or abroad, I do not yet see the absolute necessity of extirpating the Christian religion from among us. This perhaps may appear too great a

paradox, even for our wise and paradoxical age to endure; therefore I shall handle it with all tenderness, and with the utmost deference to that great and profound majority, which is of another sentiment. . . . I hope no reader imagines me so weak to stand up in the defence of real Christianity, such as used, in primitive times (if we may believe the authors of those ages), to have an influence upon men's belief and actions; to offer at the restoring of that, would indeed be a wild project; it would be to dig up foundations; to destroy at one blow all the wit, and half the learning of the kingdom. . . . Every candid reader will easily understand my discourse to be intended only in defence of nominal Christianity; the other having been for some time wholly laid aside by general consent, as utterly inconsistent with our present schemes of wealth and power."¹

Let us then examine the advantages which this abolition of the title and name of Christian might have:

"It is likewise urged, that there are, by computation, in this kingdom above ten thousand parsons, whose revenues, added to those of my lords the bishops, would suffice to maintain at least two hundred young gentlemen of wit and pleasure, and free-thinking, enemies to priestcraft, narrow principles, pedantry, and prejudices, who might be an ornament to the court and town."²

"It is likewise proposed as a great advantage to the public that if we once discard the system of the gospel, all religion will of course be banished for ever; and consequently along with it, those grievous prejudices of education, which under the names of virtue, conscience, honour, justice, and the like, are so apt to disturb the peace of human minds, and the notions whereof are so hard to be eradicated, by right reason, or free-thinking."³

¹ *An Argument to prove that the Abolishing of Christianity might be attended with some Inconveniences*, viii. 184. The Whigs were herein attacked as the friends of freethinkers.

² *Ibid.* 188.

³ *Ibid.* 192.

Then he concludes by doubling the insult :

"I am very sensible how much the gentlemen of wit and pleasure are apt to murmur, and be choked at the sight of so many daggled-tail parsons, who happen to fall in their way, and offend their eyes ; but at the same time, these wise reformers do not consider what an advantage and felicity it is for great wits to be always provided with objects of scorn and contempt, in order to exercise and improve their talents, and divert their spleen from falling on each other, or on themselves ; especially when all this may be done, without the least imaginable danger to their persons. And to urge another argument of a parallel nature : if Christianity were once abolished, how could the free-thinkers, the strong reasoners, and the men of profound learning, be able to find another subject, so calculated in all points whereon to display their abilities ? what wonderful productions of wit should we be deprived of, from those, whose genius, by continual practice, has been wholly turned upon raillery and invectives, against religion, and would, therefore, never be able to shine or distinguish themselves upon any other subject ! we are daily complaining of the great decline of wit among us, and would we take away the greatest, perhaps the only topic we have left ?" ¹

"I do very much apprehend, that in six months time after the act is passed for the extirpation of the gospel, the Bank and East India stock may fall at least one per cent. And since that is fifty times more, than ever the wisdom of our age thought fit to venture, for the preservation of Christianity, there is no reason we should be at so great a loss, merely for the sake of destroying it." ²

Swift is only a combatant, I admit ; but when we glance at this common sense and this pride, this empire over the passions of others, and this empire over

¹ *An Argument*, etc., viii. 196.

² *Ibid.* viii. 200 ; final words of the *Argument*.

himself; this force and this employment of hatred, we judge that there have rarely been such combatants. He is a pamphleteer as Hannibal was a *condottiere*.

IV.

On the night after the battle we usually unbend; we sport, we make fun, we talk in prose and verse; but with Swift this night is a continuation of the day, and the mind which leaves its trace in matters of business leaves also its trace in amusements.

What is gayer than Voltaire's *soirées*? He rails; but do we find any murderous intention in his railleries? He gets angry; but do we perceive a malignant or evil character in his passions? In him all is amiable. In an instant, through the necessity of action, he strikes, caresses, changes a hundred times his tone, his face, with abrupt movements, impetuous sallies, sometimes as a child, always as a man of the world, of taste and conversation. He wishes to entertain us; he conducts us at once through a thousand ideas, without effort, to amuse himself, to amuse us. What an agreeable host is this Voltaire, who desires to please and who knows how to please, who only dreads ennui, who does not distrust us, who is not constrained, who is always himself, who is brimful of ideas, naturalness, liveliness! If we were with him, and he rallied us, we should not be angry; we should adopt his style, we should laugh at ourselves, we should feel that he only wished to pass an agreeable hour, that he was not angry with us, that he treated us as equals and guests, that he broke out into pleasantries as a winter fire into sparks, and that he was none the less pleasant, wholesome, amusing.

Heaven grant that Swift may never jest at our

expense. The positive mind is too solid and too cold to be gay and amiable. When such a mind takes to ridicule, it does not sport with it superficially, but studies it, goes into it gravely, masters it, knows all its subdivisions and its proofs. This profound knowledge can only produce a withering pleasantry. Swift's, at bottom, is but a *reductio ad absurdum*, altogether scientific. For instance, *The art of Political Lying*¹ is a didactic treatise, whose plan might serve for a model. "In the first chapter of this excellent treatise he (the author) reasons philosophically concerning the nature of the soul of man, and those qualities which render it susceptible of lies. He supposes the soul to be of the nature of a plano-cylindrical speculum, or looking-glass. . . . The plain side represents objects just as they are; and the cylindrical side, by the rules of catoptrics, must needs represent true objects false, and false objects true. In his second chapter he treats of the nature of political lying; in the third of the lawfulness of political lying. The fourth chapter is wholly employed in this question, 'Whether the right of coinage of political lies be wholly in the government.' " Again, nothing could be stranger, more worthy of an archæological society, than the argument in which he proves that a humorous piece of Pope's² is an insidious pamphlet against the religion of the state. His *Art of Sinking in Poetry*³ has all the appearance of good rhetoric; the principles are laid down, the divisions justified; the examples chosen with extraordinary precision and method; it is perfect reason employed in the service of folly.

¹ vi. 415.—Arbuthnot is said to have written the whole or at least part of it.—TR.

² *The Rape of the Lock*.

³ xiii. 17.—Pope, Arbuthnot, and Swift wrote it, together.

His passions, like his mind, were too strong. If he wishes to scratch, he tears; his pleasantry is gloomy; by way of a joke, he drags his reader through all the disgusting details of sickness and death. Partridge, formerly a shoemaker, had turned astrologer; Swift, imperturbably cool, assumes an astrologer's title, writes maxims on the duties of the profession, and to inspire confidence, begins to predict:

"My first prediction is but a trifle; yet I will mention it to show how ignorant those sottish pretenders to astrology are in their own concerns: it relates to Partridge the almanack-maker; I have consulted the star of his nativity by my own rules, and find he will infallibly die upon the 29th of March next, about eleven at night, of a raging fever; therefore I advise him to consider of it, and settle his affairs in time."¹

The 29th of March being past, he relates how the undertaker came to hang Partridge's rooms "in close mourning;" then Ned, the sexton, asking "whether the grave is to be plain or bricked;" then Mr. White, the carpenter, to screw down the coffin; then the stone-cutter with his monument. Lastly, a successor comes and sets up in the neighbourhood, saying in his printed directions, "that he lives in the house of the late ingenious Mr. John Partridge, an eminent practitioner in leather, physic, and astrology."² We can tell beforehand the protestations of poor Partridge. Swift in his reply proves that he is dead, and is astonished at his hard words:

¹ *Predictions for the Year 1708 by Isaac Bickerstaff*, ix. 156.

² These quotations are taken from a humorous pamphlet, *Squire Bickerstaff Detected*, written by Dr. Yalden. See Swift's Works, ix. 176.—T.R.

"To call a man a fool and villain, an impudent fellow, only for differing from him in a point merely speculative, is, in my humble opinion, a very improper style for a person of his education. . . . I will appeal to Mr. Partridge himself, whether it be probable I could have been so indiscreet, to begin my predictions, with the only falsehood that ever was pretended to be in them? and this in an affair at home, where I had so many opportunities to be exact."¹

Mr. Partridge is mistaken, or deceives the public, or would cheat his heirs.

This gloomy pleasantry becomes elsewhere still more gloomy. Swift pretends that his enemy, the bookseller Curll, has just been poisoned, and relates his agony. A house-surgeon of a hospital would not write a more repulsive diary more coldly. The details, worked out with the completeness of a Hogarth, are admirably minute, but disgusting. We laugh, or rather we grin, as before the vagaries of a madman in an asylum, but in reality we feel sick at heart. Swift in his gaiety is always tragical; nothing unbends him; even when he serves, he pains you. In his *Journal to Stella* there is a sort of imperious austerity; his condescension is that of a master to a child. The charm and happiness of a young girl of sixteen cannot soften him. She has just married him, and he tells her that love is a "ridiculous passion, which has no being but in playbooks and romances;" then he adds, with perfect brutality:

"I never yet knew a tolerable woman to be fond of her sex; . . . your sex employ more thought, memory, and application to be fools than would serve to make them wise and useful. . . . When I reflect on this, I cannot conceive you to be human creatures, but a sort of species hardly a degree above a monkey;

¹ *A Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff*, ix. 186.

who has more diverting tricks than any of you, is an animal less mischievous and expensive, might in time be a tolerable critic in velvet and brocade, and, for aught I know, would equally become them."¹

Will poetry calm such a mind? Here, as elsewhere, he is most unfortunate. He is excluded from great transports of imagination, as well as from the lively digressions of conversation. He can attain neither the sublime nor the agreeable; he has neither the artist's rapture, nor the entertainment of the man of the world. Two similar sounds at the end of two equal lines have always consoled the greatest troubles: the old muse, after three thousand years, is a young and divine nurse; and her song lulls the sickly nations whom she still visits, as well as the young, flourishing races amongst whom she has appeared. The involuntary music, in which thought wraps itself, hides ugliness and unveils beauty. Feverish man, after the labours of the evening and the anguish of the night, sees at morning the beaming whiteness of the opening heaven; he gets rid of himself, and the joy of nature from all sides enters with oblivion into his heart. If misery pursues him, the poetic afflatus, unable to wipe it out, transforms it; it becomes ennobled, he loves it, and thenceforth he bears it; for the only thing to which he cannot resign himself is littleness. Neither Faust nor Manfred have exhausted human grief; they drank from the cruel cup a generous wine, they did not reach the dregs. They enjoyed themselves, and nature; they tasted the greatness which was in them, and the beauty of creation; they pressed with their bruised hands all the thorns with which

¹ *Letter to a very young Lady on her marriage*, ix. 420-422.

necessity has made our way thorny, but they saw them blossom with roses, fostered by the purest of their noble blood. There is nothing of the sort in Swift: what is wanting most in his verses is poetry. The positive mind can neither love nor understand it; it sees therein only a kind of mechanism or a fashion, and employs it only for vanity and conventionality. When in his youth Swift attempted Pindaric odes, he failed lamentably. I cannot remember a line of his which indicates a genuine sentiment of nature: he saw in the forests only logs of wood, and in the fields only sacks of corn. He employed mythology, as we put on a wig, ill-timed, wearily and scornfully. His best piece, *Cadenus and Vanessa*,¹ is a poor, threadbare allegory. To praise Vanessa, he supposes that the nymphs and shepherds pleaded before Venus, the first against men, the second against women; and that Venus, wishing to end the debates, made in Vanessa a model of perfection. What can such a conception furnish but flat apostrophes and pedantic comparisons? Swift, who elsewhere gives a recipe for an epic poem, is here the first to make use of it. And even his rude prosaic freaks tear this Greek frippery at every turn. He puts a legal procedure into heaven; he makes Venus use all kinds of technical terms. He introduces witnesses, "questions on the fact, bill with costs dismiss'd," etc. They talk so loud that the goddess fears to lose her influence, to be driven from Olympus, or else

"Shut out from heaven and earth,
Fly to the sea, my place of birth:
There live with daggled mermaids pent,
And keep on fish perpetual Lent."²

¹ *Cadenus and Vanessa*, xiv. 441.

² *Ibid.* 443.

When he relates the touching history of *Baucis and Philemon*,¹ he degrades it by a travesty. He does not love the ancient nobleness and beauty; the two gods become in his hands begging friars, Philemon and Baucis Kentish peasants. For a recompense, their house becomes a church, and Philemon a parson:

“ His talk was now of tithes and dues;
He smoked his pipe and read the news. . . .
Against dissenters would repine,
And stood up firm for ‘right divine.’ ”

Wit luxuriates, incisive, in little compact verses, vigorously coined, of extreme conciseness, facility, precision; but compared to La Fontaine, it is wine turned into vinegar. Even when he comes to the charming Vanessa, his vein is still the same: to praise her childhood, he puts her name first on the list, as a little model girl, just like a schoolmaster:

“ And all their conduct would be tried
By her, as an unerring guide:
Offending daughters oft would hear
Vanessa’s praise rung in their ear:
Miss Betty, when she does a fault,
Lest fall her knife, or spills the salt,
Will thus be by her mother chid:
‘Tis what Vanessa never did!’ ”²

A strange way of admiring Vanessa, and of proving his admiration for her. He calls her a nymph, and treats her like a school-girl! Cadenus “now could praise, esteem, approve, but understood not what was love!” Nothing could be truer, and Stella felt it, like others. The verses which he writes every year on her birthday,

¹ *Baucis and Philemon*, xiv. 83.

² *Cadenus and Vanessa*, xiv. 448.

are a pedagogue's censures and praises; if he gives her any good marks, it is with restrictions. Once he inflicts on her a little sermon on want of patience; again, by way of compliment, he concocts this delicate warning:

"Stella, this day is thirty-four
(We shan't dispute a year or more).
However, Stella, be not troubled,
Although thy size and years are doubled
Since first I saw thee at sixteen,
The brightest virgin on the green,
So little is thy form declin'd,
Made up so largely in thy mind."

And he insists with exquisite taste:

"O, would it please the gods to split
Thy beauty, size, and years, and wit!
No age could furnish out a pair
Of nymphs so graceful, wise, and fair."¹

Decidedly this man is an artisan, strong of arm, terrible at his work and in a fray, but narrow of soul, treating a woman as if she were a log of wood. Rhyme and rhythm are only business-like tools, which have served him to press and launch his thought; he has put nothing but prose into them: poetry was too fine to be grasped by those coarse hands.

But in prosaic subjects, what truth and force! How this masculine nakedness crushes the affected elegance and artificial poetry of Addison and Pope! There are no epithets; he leaves his thought as he conceived it, valuing it for and by itself, needing neither ornaments, nor preparation, nor extension; above the tricks of the profession, scholastic conventionalisms, the vanity of the

¹ *Verses on Stella's Birthday*, March 13, 1713-19, xiv. 469.

rhymester, the difficulties of the art ; master of his subject and of himself. This simplicity and naturalness astonish us in verse. Here, as elsewhere, his originality is entire, and his genius creative ; he surpasses his classical and timid age ; he tyrannises over form, breaks it, dare utter anything, spares himself no strong word. Acknowledge the greatness of this invention and audacity ; he alone is a superior being, who finds everything and copies nothing. What a biting comicality in the *Grand Question Debated* ! He has to represent the entrance of a captain into a castle, his airs, his insolence, his folly, and the admiration caused by these qualities ! The lady serves him first ; the servants stare at him :

“ The parsons for envy are ready to burst ;
 The servants amazed are scarce ever able
 To keep off their eyes, as they wait at the table ;
 And Molly and I have thrust in our nose
 To peep at the captain in all his fine clo'es.
 Dear madam, be sure he's a fine spoken man,
 Do but hear on the clergy how glib his tongue ran :
 ‘ And madam,’ says he, ‘ if such dinners you give,
 You'll ne'er want for parsons as long as you live.
 I ne'er knew a parson without a good nose ;
 But the devil's as welcome wherever he goes ;
 G—d—n me ! they bid us reform and repent,
 But, z—s ! by their looks they never keep Lent :
 Mister curate, for all your grave looks, I'm afraid
 You cast a sheep's eye on her ladyship's maid :
 I wish she would lend you her pretty white hand
 In mending your cassock, and smoothing your band '
 (For the dean was so shabby, and look'd like a ninny,
 That the captain suppos'd he was curate to Jinny).
 ‘ Whenever you see a cassock and gown,
 A hundred to one but it covers a clown.

Observe how a parson comes into a room,
 G—d—n me, he hobbles as bad as my groom ;
 A *scholard*, when just from his college broke loose,
 Can hardly tell how to cry bo to a goose ;
 Your *Novels* and *Bluturks* and *Omurs*,¹ and stuff,
 By G—, they don't signify this pinch of snuff ;
 To give a young gentleman right education,
 The army's the only good school in the nation."²

This has been *seen*, and herein lies the beauty of Swift's verses: they are personal; they are not developed themes, but impressions felt and observations collected. Read *The Journal of a Modern Lady*, *The Furniture of a Woman's Mind*, and other pieces by the dozen: they are dialogues transcribed or opinions put on paper after quitting a drawing-room. *The Progress of Marriage* represents a dean of fifty-two married to a young worldly coquette; do we not see in this title alone all the fears of the bachelor of St. Patrick's? What diary is more familiar and more pungent than his verses on his own death?

" 'He hardly breathes.' 'The Dean is dead.'
 Before the passing bell begun,
 The news through half the town has run ;
 'O may we all for death prepare !
 What has he left ? and who's his heir ?'
 'I know no more than what the news is ;
 'Tis all bequeathed to public uses.'
 'To public uses ! there's a whim !
 What had the public done for him ?
 Mere envy, avarice, and pride :
 He gave it all—but first he died.

¹ Ovids, Plutarchs, Homers.

² *The Grand Question Debated*, xv. 158.

And had the Dean in all the nation
 No worthy friend, no poor relation?
 So ready to do strangers good,
 Forgetting his own flesh and blood!'. . .
 Poor Pope will grieve a month, and Gay
 A week, and Arbuthnot a day. . . .
 My female friends, whose tender hearts
 Have better learn'd to act their parts,
 Receive the news in doleful dumps:
 The Dean is dead (pray what is trumps?)
 Then, Lord, have mercy on his soul!
 (Ladies, I'll venture for the vole.)
 Six Deans, they say, must bear the pall.
 (I wish I knew what king to call.)
 Madam, your husband will attend
 The funeral of so good a friend?
 No, madam, 'tis a shocking sight,
 And he's engaged to-morrow night:
 My Lady Club will take it ill,
 If he should fail her at quadrille.
 He lov'd the Dean—(I lead a heart),
 But dearest friends they say must part.
 His time was come: he ran his race;
 We hope he's in a better place."¹

Such is the inventory of human friendships. All poetry exalts the mind, but this depresses it; instead of concealing reality, it unveils it; instead of creating illusions, it removes them. When he wishes to give a *description of the morning*,² he shows us the street-sweepers, the "watchful bailiffs," and imitates the different street cries. When he wishes to paint the rain,³ he describes "filth of all hues and odours," the

¹ *On the Death of Dr. Swift*, xiv. 331. ² *Swift's Works*, xiv. 93.

³ *A Description of a City Shower*, xiv. 94.

"swelling kennels," the "dead cats," "turnip-tops," "stinking sprats," which "come tumbling down the flood." His long verses whirl all this filth in their eddies. We smile to see poetry degraded to this use; we seem to be at a masquerade; it is a queen travestied into a rough country girl. We stop, we look on, with the sort of pleasure we feel in drinking a bitter draught. Truth is always good to know, and in the splendid piece which artists show us we need a manager to tell us the number of the hired applauders and of the supernumeraries. It would be well if he only drew up such a list! Numbers look ugly, but they only affect the mind; other things, the oil of the lamps, the odours of the side scenes, all that we cannot name, remains to be told. I cannot do more than hint at the length to which Swift carries us; but this I must do, for these extremes are the supreme effort of his despair and his genius: we must touch upon them in order to measure and know him. He drags poetry not only through the mud, but into the filth; he rolls in it like a raging madman, he enthrones himself in it, and bespatters all passers-by. Compared with his, all foul words are decent and agreeable. In Aretin and Brantôme, in La Fontaine and Voltaire, there is a soupçon of pleasure. With the first, unchecked sensuality, with the others, malicious gaiety, are excuses; we are scandalised, not disgusted; we do not like to see in a man a bull's fury or an ape's buffoonery; but the bull is so eager and strong, the ape so funny and smart, that we end by looking on or being amused. Then, again, however coarse their pictures may be, they speak of the accompaniments of love: Swift touches only upon the results of digestion, and that merely with disgust and

revenge ; he pours them out with horror and sneering at the wretches whom he describes. He must not in this be compared to Rabelais ; that good giant, that drunken doctor, rolls himself joyously about on his dunghill, thinking no evil ; the dunghill is warm, convenient, a fine place to philosophise and sleep off one's wine. Raised to this enormity, and enjoyed with this heedlessness, the bodily functions become poetical. When the casks are emptied down the giant's throat, and the viands are gorged, we sympathise with so much bodily comfort ; in the heavings of this colossal belly and the laughter of this homeric mouth, we see as through a mist, the relics of bacchanal religions, the fecundity, the monstrous joy of nature ; these are the splendours and disorders of its first births. The cruel positive mind, on the contrary, clings only to vileness ; it will only see what is behind things ; armed with sorrow and boldness, it spares no ignoble detail, no obscene word. Swift enters the dressing-room,¹ relates the disenchantments of love,² dishonours it by a medley of drugs and physic,³ describes the cosmetics and a great many more things.⁴ He takes his evening walk by solitary walls,⁵ and in these pitiable prying has his microscope ever in his hand. Judge what he sees and suffers ; this is his ideal beauty and his jesting conversation, and we may fancy that he has for philosophy, as for poetry and politics, execration and disgust.

¹ *The Lady's Dressing-room.*

² *Strephon and Chloë.*

³ *A Love Poem from a Physician.*

⁴ *The Progress of Beauty.*

⁵ *The Problem, and The Examination of Certain Abuses.*

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